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**THE FATALISTS.**



**A NOVEL.**

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**Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.**

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THE  
**FATALISTS ;**  
OR,  
**RECORDS OF 1814 AND 1815.**

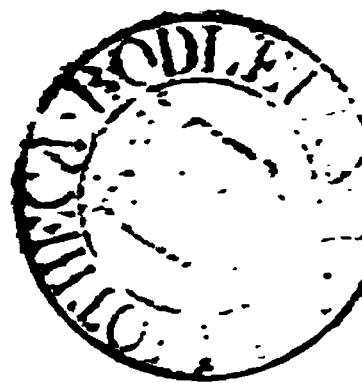
**A. Nabel.**

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

BY

**MRS. KELLY,**

*AUTHOR OF THE MATRON OF KRIN, &c.*



*This is the excellent soporific of the world, that when we are sick in fortune, (often the merit of our own behaviour), we make guilty of our disasters, the sun, the moon, and the stars ; as if we were villains by necessity—fools by heavenly compulsion—knaves, thieves, and treachans, by spherical predominance—drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of planetary influence.*

**SHAKESPEARE.**

**VOL. I.**

**LONDON :**

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**1821.**



## PREFACE.



THE opinion that a certain fatality governs every act of our lives is so dangerous to the empire of reason, and militates so much against the efforts of human prudence, that the moralist is called upon to combat it; and again, the principle of predestination is so destructive to the exercise of freewill in man, and so remote from giving a moral tendency to his actions, that the Christian is justified in weakening its influence wherever he can. To steer clear of this opinion, and not act under the influence of this principle, but conformable to the clear light of reason

(which, when illumed by faith, is conscience), is the safe path of the just; and to rely with implicit confidence on divine providence for happy results, shall be his hope here, and prove his reward hereafter. To inculcate such doctrine is the object of the present work, which would attempt to blend useful instruction with innocent amusement; and if it can, even in a small degree, produce on one weak and erring mind such happy effect, the author shall not feel wholly unrecompensed.



# THE FATALISTS.

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## CHAPTER I.

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—————Oh, Peace!  
Thou soul and source of social life,  
Beneath whose calm inspiring influence,  
Science her views enlarges, Art refines,  
And spreading Commerce opens all her stores—  
Blest be the man divine who gives us thee!

Thomson..

**A**BOUT the middle of April in the year 1814, a general rejoicing gladdened the whole kingdom of Ireland, on the cessation of arms caused by the abdication of Napoleon Buonaparte. Every city, town, and village, kindled with brightening flame, *luminously* expressive of the

common joy with which was hailed long-absent peace; and in every quarter of the kingdom were heard the harmless roar of cannon, and the merry changes of joy bells. The village of — was not the least tardy in testifying the universal joy all felt on this occasion. Various were the gay groups that appeared in the thronged streets, each meeting with joyful gratulation his friends or neighbours; and radiant were the dwellings with innumerable lights, amidst which, on several of the windows, blazed curious emblematical devices. Here a branch of laurel, cut out of faded green silk, delineated withering triumph, and there a painting of two grey ducks, pulling between them, with voracious appetite, a stalk of beans, was intended to represent doves bearing the olive of peace! Another window presented to the admiring spectators Buonaparte *dished*, with the lion of England trampling him under his paw, and our mighty Wellington (the figure indeed rather large

large for the background of a picture) appeared (where the clouds in the piece ought to be) soaring high above the prostrate hero!

Buonaparte *dished* failed not, however, to attract general notice; and though there were many who greeted this representation of the abject state of the fallen hero with a shout of approbation, there were others who turned away in disgust with a hiss of contempt. Of this last number was sir Richard Courteney's postboy, who, with his letter-pouch strapped to his breast, from which he had just been depositing letters in the office, and mounted on his long-tailed pony, had paused with gaping wonder, like the rest of the crowd, *en passant*, to gaze on this strange spectacle.—“Arragh! by my sowl, boys,” said he, “’tis all a *bam*: that raw-boned thing there is no more like Buonaparte himself than I am like an archbishop; and this, they say, is our own lord Wellington!

only look where the damned rascal of a painter, who deserves a sound drubbing for the work, has put our great Irish hero riding in the air, and his charger rearing on nothing, like a leap-jack, just as if he wanted to insinuate that his victories were all a puff of wind; and that he fought, and our poor countrymen bled—for what? why for nothing at all, boys. Is not that the meaning of the picture?”

“ I believe so,” cried one.—“ The post-boy must know best,” responded another; while Tom Pigeon cantered away, whistling a tune that expressed more of discontent than pleasure.

“ Holla, Tom !” roared out an acquaintance, “ wont you stop for a minute, man? You are in such a hurry, galloping off at the rate of a hunt, that I can scarce overtake you.”

Tom, arrested by the voice of his friend, instantly drew up his long-tailed pony, and with a friendly shake of the hand, and  
an

an interjection of agreeable surprise, returned with welcome salutation his loud hoarse greeting.

“Never better met,” cried Tom. “Fine sport! rare doings to-night at the castle! Come, get up behind me.”

“Why! what is in the wind now?” demanded the other. “Is Mr. Charles come home, or Miss Courteney going to be married?”

“Neither; but better fun, I assure you. A wedding, *you know*, is often but a merry-come sorrow, and after a soldier’s best joys come on wounds and bloodshed; but we shall have rare sport—such a blaze at the castle as you never heard of! Nothing less than a world of feasting, and as much drink, man, as a canal-boat would swim in between two locks; and then for the gentry, there will be fireworks and a ball. The whole country is invited; sir Richard has not been for many years in such high spirits; and as for my lady, she is near a change, or she never would have

consented to such work. But up with you, Jerry, and I'll tell you as we go along all about these doings."

Tom Pigeon, though he had for some time reached the hardy years of maturity, still retained the fresh bloom and diminutive stature of a boy; all the frolic of wild youth sported in his gamesome eye, the innocent smile of childhood played about his mouth, and on his chin the down of manhood was yet scarcely perceptible. The indolence, so natural to youth when not roused by energy, or urged by necessity to exertion, gave softness and effeminacy to his frame, to which the abundance of a great man's hall-table added a plumpness that strikingly contrasted the hardy, gaunt, tall figure, that now stood before him, towering to a height which greatly overtopped little 'Tom mounted on his pony. In this person the ample chest and mien erect expressed command; the brawny shoulders, muscular arm, and sinewy wrist, strength and vigour.

Trained

Trained to the rude chase, and to over-leap every boundary of hedge and wall, his limbs possessed lightness and agility; he preferred therefore making use of them to mounting the little pony, and with giant strides imperceptibly measured his rapid way; while Tom, in fairy pace pushing on the palfrey, thus continued the conversation.—“ I am better pleased, Mr. Gauntlet, than my share of to-night’s punch, to have met you so lucky. You shall have brave sport; and Mrs. Kitty will be so happy to see you.”

“ I am in no humour, Tom, to share your sport, or enjoy Mrs. Kitty’s favour; for I was up all night, and feel harassed and weary after a long day’s march, and much unprofitable labour.”

As Jerry Gauntlet spoke, the paleness of night-watching and fatigue spread over his sallow cheek, which appeared hollow, from too great and incessant exertion.

“ Come, at any rate,” rejoined the other,

"and you may hear some news of your favourite, the captain."

"Do you think so?" demanded Jerry, with vivacity, and his piercing black eyes, which possessed all the keenness of penetration and the fire of genius, kindled with a sudden glow of animation. "I would go, by God! to Jericho, to hear news of captain Plunket, who is as brave and noble a gentleman as ever drew a sword. Unfortunate fellow that I was, not to have enlisted in the same regiment, when he went into the army! I have never had a day's good luck since he left the country; and what is still worse, I don't deserve it."

Jerry sighed profoundly, at some unpleasant retrospects no doubt which crossed his mind at the moment.

"I am sure I wonder," says little Tom, "what has attached you so much to captain Plunket. For my own part, I was always more inclined to fear than love him;



him; there was a something so proud and commanding about that young gentleman."

"It was that something commanding and spirited," replied Jerry Gauntlet, "a noble daring, with his intrepid disregard of danger and death, that made me love as well as fear the captain. I was the humble companion, or rather attendant, of all his field sports, and his generosity won my affection. When a boy, he saved my life at the hazard of his own; and his heroic boldness in that dangerous moment secured my lasting gratitude."

"How was that?" inquired Tom; "it is not every one, like yourself, Mr. Gauntlet, that is willing to venture his neck for another."

This was spoken with a smile something bordering on a sneer.

A gloomy frown lowered on the dark impending brow of Gauntlet, who, in a stern voice, exclaimed—"On your life, youngster, I charge you to forbear these

jests. I will not be sported with ; and as for the captain, I'll never hear his name mentioned but with the respect it merits."

Tom Pigeon apologized, promised to be more circumspect in future, and requested to be informed of those particulars relative to his friend's escape from death, to which he had alluded ; on which Gauntlet, resuming in a gentler strain the conversation, thus continued :—

" Returning one day, when we were boys, from some pleasurable excursion, we had to cross a millstream, over which a plank was placed for the convenience of passing and repassing. Master Charles had in his bosom a young bullfinch, which he was bringing home to make a pet of for Miss Geraldine. Crossing the plank, it took wing, and sheltered itself in a bush that projected over the stream. But just fledged, though it had regained its liberty, it was unable to fly further ; and master Charles, not willing to lose his present for Miss Geraldine, sprung instantly on the  
the

the other side, to retake the little prisoner, while I stretched forward on the plank to the full extent of my arm with the same intention. In my impatience, however, to regain the bird, unmindful of the due equipoise of my body, I extended myself too far, and was precipitated into the water. The mill was going, and a rapid flush in the stream, down which I was borne so impetuously towards another world, that Jeremiah Gauntlet's glorious career would have been soon ended in this, if master Charles, forgetful of the bird, and even Miss Geraldine, did not instantly throw off his coat, and plunge after me into the water. With mighty grasp the heroic fellow seized me by the collar, and with strong arm he bore me against the swelling stream, while with the other he nobly buffeted the current, till the dear boy, with his prize rescued from grim death, regained the bank in safety.

“ Amazed at my unhopèd-for preservation from a watery grave, by the noble exertion

exertion of a young gentleman whom I followed not as friend or companion, but to serve, I vowed eternal gratitude, and from that blessed moment have held sacred my vow."

"I tell you," says Tom, "it is what very few of your gentlefolks would do for any of us. They expect we will faithfully serve and venture our lives for them; but shew me one among them will endanger as much as his little finger for our preservation. There is my lady, that is so good and pious, God bless her holiness! the first on the list of every public charity, and giving so bountifully her alms every Christmas to the poor; why she would as soon venture to the very gates of hell, with which she is continually threatening us, as near a sick person that might want her assistance. I remember well, Jerry, when captain Plunket was last here, and that he walked out one fine evening with the ladies, in passing a cabin near the road, they perceived a poor naked woman stooped

stooped in the ditch, and striving to drink out of a little stream that rumbled over the pebbles. Her head was uncovered, and her hair hanging loosely about her face, gave an air of wildness to her countenance. Without any person to look to her, the poor woman, in the height of a fever, had quitted her bed to cool herself at this little stream. My lady, as soon as she saw her, ran away with Miss Geraldine and the child, as she would from a mad dog, while captain Plunket, taking her in his arms, carried the poor sick creature out of the ditch, and placed her on her own bed, from whence he stirred not a step till he procured her relief and attendance; though on his return my lady would not suffer him to enter the castle, or approach one of the family, till he was washed all over with warm vinegar, and that we made an *autordeffry* of his clothes, as Miss Geraldine called it, for fear of spreading the infection."

"Your rich people, friend Tom, have  
much

much to value here, therefore they are right to take care of themselves; while we, poor devils! whose support is often precarious and uncertain, may well be prodigal of our lives on an occasion. That however was not the case with captain Plunket; he never considered self where he could serve a fellow-creature, and from a boy he despised all danger. What a brave officer must he be! and what an arrant poltroon have I proved in not going with him! Before this I might have distinguished myself, and would be something, or perhaps a musket or cannon-ball had settled my business."

"In the last case you are better where you are," said Tom, dryly.

Jerry Gauntlet, unmindful of Tom's remark, paused, cast down his eyes, and heaved a sigh as profound as the thought which seemed labouring in his bosom.—

"Women's sighs and women's smiles," he resumed, in a tone of recovered gaiety, "are the bane of our glory, Tom: they  
unsoldier

unsoldier a man, and make him what nature never intended. But it is all before us," he continued, in a voice of careless indifference—"what is to be, must be; he therefore that was born to be hanged, can never be drowned, and what is a man's luck he'll meet with."

In this manner did the two friends continue to converse, occasionally interrupted by the splendid equipages and gay retinues which passed them on the road, till they entered on the long avenue of tall pine and spreading oak that led up to Dermont Castle, where astonishment and admiration at the new scene that presented itself, suspended in wondering and gratified attention all further conversation. Instead of the single taper that was wont to glimmer in the watchtower where the house-steward slept, and the occasional lights appearing and disappearing in the inhabited part of the castle, all was now one blaze of effulgence, that streamed through the windows on the grey wall of  
the

the court, which reflected back a sudden lustre on the frowning parapet; and instead of the stillness and solemnity of night, here rarely interrupted but by the sighing of the wind through the trees, or the scream of the owl, as he flitted to or from his gloomy haunt in some mouldering tower, there was now heard the busy hum of innumerable voices, with the loud peal of varied instruments borne on the evening breeze, but mellowed by distance to soft and delightful harmony.

As the friends gained the extremity of the long avenue, and paused to listen, at the light wooden bridge, on the very spot where the awful portcullis had in ancient times forbade the daring invader to pass, the last notes of *God save the King* died away on their ears, and was almost instantly followed by *Rule Britannia*. From this spot they wound round the deep-sunk fosse, now filled with harmless shrubs, where once the  
broad



broad stream threatened instant destruction on the hostile assailant, to gain the stable-yard, in which place Tom consigned his pony to his own stall, and then proceeded with his friend to the servants' hall, to bid him, in the full bumper, a hearty welcome.

Like the generality of mankind, who abandon the humble, as soon as they can intrude themselves into the higher ranks of society, we will leave these good folks here regaling themselves, while we take a peep at more splendid company.

From a noble Gothic hall the guests, as they arrived, were conducted through a greenhouse (where the air was perfumed with the scent of odoriferous plants) to the pleasure-grounds, which appeared gay with pendent lamps, brilliant with fireworks, and jocund with sweet minstrelsy. Here the company were joyfully welcomed by sir Richard Courteney (who delighted to evince his loyalty in this display of gaiety and magnificence), and after the  
first

first compliments passed, were led up to a Grecian temple, in which all the luxuries of this and foreign climes were spread forth to the ravished taste, and where lady Courteney presided the queen of the splendid feast.

Over a verdant lawn, on which was a grand exhibition of fireworks, and through the illuminated walks of the shrubbery, part of the company spread in cheerful groups; while in the glade opening between lofty trees (whose embowering branches twined in a rustic arch, and that led up to the temple) others again formed into a dancing party; the music, to which the dancers beat merry time, concealed in the shade of the trees, appearing the effect of enchantment; and the whole brilliant scene presenting to the vivid imagination one of those splendid visions of fairy-land with which youth delights to charm the fancy.

Of all the beauties who here figured in the airy mazes of the sprightly dance, the  
fair

fair Geraldine, sir Richard Courteney's only daughter, shone unrivalled. Scarce rising to the middle stature, her sylph-like form was moulded according to nature's fairest proportion; her skin was of the most dazzling fairness, and her complexion of the tint of vermillion; her eyes were celestial blue, and though not stealing into the heart by their soft languishing, nor consuming by their ardent fire, they charmed by a mild expression of playful vivacity, chastened by modest diffidence, that charm of all others the most attractive in early youth. Her beautiful flaxen tresses, little indebted to art, curled in natural ringlets round a face that was of true feminine loveliness, and gave to her countenance an air of angelic innocence; while the cherub smile that played round her rosy lips, indicated the placidity, sweetness, and good humour, of which her breast was the fair tenement.

Endued by nature with an acute sensibility, and all the amiable propensities of  
a tender

a tender and feeling heart, this young lady was readily susceptible of quick impressions in favour of an engaging object: she received therefore not unmoved the tender assiduities of major Blandford, who to an extremely-fine person united captivating manners and a most graceful address. Bred up, however, in great seclusion, under the severe restraints of a rigorous mode of worship, and unacquainted with the freedom of flirtation, by which a modern belle would mark her predilection for a favoured admirer, she carefully restrained her feelings within her own bosom, unless when they unconsciously escaped in a modest blush, the downcast eye, or stolen glance, which, though unobserved of all others, passed not unnoticed of the handsome major, but created in his breast an irresistible interest for so lovely a young creature.

Thus mutually pleased with each other, it was only with extreme reluctance that major Blandford resigned, at the conclusion  
of

of the first set, the hand of the fair Geraldine. Yet would he not even then relinquish so invaluable a possession, till he had first obtained her promise to become his partner in the third set ; and unwilling in the interim to engage any other fair, he pleaded fatigue, and reclining against the trunk of a tree, surveyed with ecstatic delight the graceful movements of the youthful beauty who had captivated all his attention.

Lady Courteney, who was a woman of grave composed manners, of austere morals, and of strict religious principles, possessed no relish for this gay and bustling scene ; she would much rather have held with those holy men of her creed, who promulgate and explain the Gospels, social conversation, which oscillating between the upper and nether world, would alternately take into consideration the conversion of the unbelievers here on earth and the bliss of the elect in heaven. But such as these sought not nor found admission

admission in such tumultuary scenes; occasionally employed therefore on the contemplation of her own pious thoughts, to which she 'made, in defiance of the gay crowd, faithful and frequent recurrence, she sat in the temple where the refreshments were spread, and which overlooked the sprightly scene, a tranquil but indifferent spectator. Yet strange to tell, the natural apathy of her character seemed for an instant to abandon her, as she beheld major Blandford lead Miss Courteney to join the dancers at the commencement of the third set; and a something of interest gave a new-born expression of animation to her cold features, while she inquired of a lady who sat next her concerning the gentleman's character and expectations. Whatever might have been the information which lady Courteney received on this occasion, it had, after some minutes of deep meditation, a most happy effect in relaxing into a kind of smiling complaisance her usually grave countenance.

She

She appeared to observe with pleasure the major's polite attention to her daughter, and when on a summons to supper, the company withdrew from the gardens into the house, she committed, with an affable and frank confidence, the young lady to his protection.

Geraldine, disciplined for the last eight years in the severe school of rigorous self-denial, could no otherwise account for this extraordinary condescension in her frigid mamma towards major Blandford, but by supposing that gentleman endued with superlative perfections. This supposition caused the young lady, naturally enough, to relax somewhat of the reserve she usually assumed towards strangers, more indeed in compliance with the oft-repeated maternal admonition, than in conformity to her own frank and candid nature. Major Blandford had no cause therefore to be dissatisfied with the polite courtesy of his noble hostess, or the encouragement which his gallant and tender assiduities obtained from her fair daughter.

## CHAPTER II.



This is no mortal business, nor no sound  
That the earth owes—I hear it now above me.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE sun, just peering above the clouds, began to cheer with his enlivening ray the animal world, when the company departed from Dermont Castle ; and lady Courteney, quite exhausted with such long sitting-up, and her calm spirits disquieted by the riotous scene, retreated in eager haste to her apartment. With the assistance of her attendant, Mrs. Kitty Hobbs, she threw off her upper garments, the superfluous robes of vain pomp and vanity, and put on a loose wrapper and her nightcap, when, instead of retiring to seek repose, she withdrew, as was her usual custom, to her closet, in rigorous self-examination and fervent



vent prayer, to make some amends for the trespasses of the past day.

Accustomed, in the eagerness of her supplicatory petition, to burst occasionally forth into audible and ardent ejaculations, lady Courteney exclaimed—"Purify me, O Lord, after my reluctant intercourse this night with the unrighteous, that I may stand justified in thy sight, and not be classed with the wicked. Maintain in my husband a true spirit of godliness, that may prevent him in future from making of his sober dwelling the temple of Babylon. Preserve the lovely young creature, whom thy divine providence hath committed to my care, from the fascinating spell by which such pleasures might lead her into errors, and purify her heart of all carnal affections that——"

"Sinful woman!" cried a voice from above, "purge thy own wicked heart of its foul sins—no human effort can atone for human frailty."

Lady Courteney started—the prayer she

was just proffering expired on her quivering lips, and appalled with indescribable horror, she threw a fearful glance around, to discover from whence the voice issued. No human being, sacrilegiously daring to intrude on her holy privacy, was perceptible to visual organ, in the limited extent of the small apartment. The voice seemed to issue from above; it was audible, distinct, and solemn, and ringing awfully in her affrighted ear, appeared like the sound of the last trumpet summoning her to judgment. With hair erect and frenzied brow, as if she had beheld a spectre, she started from her knees, and rushed precipitately out of the closet, in which hasty retreat scarce were her shivering limbs found able to support her to the bed, on which she tottering sunk with a deep groan, half lifeless.

Sir Richard, who only the moment before had passed from his dressing-room to his chamber, and was just stepping into bed, became dreadfully shocked and  
alarmed

alarmed at his dear lady's prostrate condition. Raising her tenderly in his arms, he inquired, with the most affectionate solicitude, as he gazed anxiously on her pale countenance, what had caused such indisposition; but her paralysed tongue, unable to reply, deep groans and averted looks, were the only return she could make to his tender inquiries. Amazed and trembling with increasing alarm, the terror-struck baronet rang the bell for lady Courteney's woman, with whose timely aid he at length succeeded in reviving the fainting lady, and quieting her emotions, when, carefully locking within her own breast the awful warning she had just received, she accounted for her sudden illness by attributing it to the fatigue of entertaining her guests, and having so long outstaid her usual time of retiring.

While this scene was passing in lady Courteney's chamber, Miss Courteney, in a more exuberant flow of lively spirits than perhaps she had ever experienced,

was retired to her own, with her mind so full of the image of major Blandford, that she could not restrain her tongue from dwelling on the beauty of his fine form, and the charms of his conversation, to the respectable woman who assisted to undress her, and who, by the purity of her conduct and intelligence of her well-informed mind, was become the young lady's governess and companion rather than attendant.

“Major Blandford is certainly very handsome—much too effeminately handsome for a soldier, I should imagine,” replied this person, to whom such conversation was far from pleasing. “A weather-beaten face, and a colour somewhat imbrowned by the warm climate under which he might be supposed to have fought, would, in a military man, appear more appropriate to his hazardous profession, than the fair forehead and delicate complexion of major Blandford, which would do credit to any lovely young lady.”

“He

“ He is young, and may not have seen much service,” returned Miss Courteney.

“ It appears, however, he is *old* enough to have attained the rank of major, which I was such a fool as to suppose could only have been acquired by *service*,” rejoined the other. “ But perhaps, Miss Courteney, when major Blandford was obliged to serve, he fought cased up in steel armour, like the knights we read of in romances, or what is more probable, borrowing his idea of defence from the Spanish nuns, behind a thick veil, equally impenetrable to the scorching rays of the sun or the keen blasts of the wind—to sabre-wound or musket-shot of enemy.”

This last sentence was uttered in a tone of irony by the governess, which did not appear to give much pleasure to the young lady, who replied—“ You are severe, Mrs. O’Grady, and seem willing to indulge a sarcastic humour, at the expence of a person of whom you scarce know any thing.”

“ The *appearance* of the military man

is what alone strikes me, my dear child," answered the penetrating O'Grady. "To me he seems one of these gay young officers, who would answer well for holiday service in a garrison town in time of peace, or to fetch and carry, as we say of a well-trained dog, in his attendance on the ladies, whom I would venture to swear he would rather *serve* than defend. How unlike what our own hero, Charles Plunket, appeared on his return from Spain, after an absence of five years!—his forehead and throat, when he left this castle a mere boy, were as fair as your own snowy bosom; but when he returned here, the olive was alone perceptible, and on his finely-rounded cheek the sunburnt brown struggled with the crimson of pure blood for pre-eminence. But captain Plunket is the son of a brave soldier, and will do honour to the memory of his noble father."

"What need, my dear Fanny, of this contention about them?" returned Geraldine. "Charles Plunket is my cousin,  
and

and has been my playfellow and friend; and do you imagine there is any one can obtain a preference over him in my estimation?"

With these words, and apparently overpowered with fatigue, Miss Courteney threw herself into bed, and Mrs. O'Grady retired to her quiet pillow.

Fanny O'Grady, while quite a small girl, was taken to attend on the first lady Courteney, the mother of Geraldine. Of quick perceptions, lively ideas, and an active and ardent spirit, the little girl soon attracted the attention of the young lady's governess, a woman of talent and information, who, thinking it a pity a mind so susceptible of improvement should lie dormant for want of proper culture, bestowed some pains on her education. However wounding it may appear to aristocratic pride, we frequently discover, in even the low-born sons and daughters of Hibernia, sparks of native genius, which, in despite of poverty, or the defect of education, will

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occasionally

occasionally emanate a pure flame that astonishes : or it may perhaps be the old Milesian blood, flowing from their hearts to their heads, gives such sublimity to their untutored thoughts—such sharpness to their ideas, and fire to the spirit.

Fanny possessed from nature, in a high degree, this intuitive genius, which had been considerably improved by an education superior to her station, yet so as not to correct the defects peculiar to her natural disposition. This education had sharpened her wit, given dignity and elevation to her sentiments, and a refined and delicate turn to her thoughts. Of pure morals and an independent spirit, it rendered her contemptuous of vice and indignant of oppression. It also gave additional keenness to her native penetration, by which she discovered the secret defects of others ; but it did not improve her good sense, by assisting to correct her own, or teaching her the control of the passions, to



to which hard lesson the national impetuosity of her spirit was a great obstacle.

While yet very young, Fanny O'Grady had formed a matrimonial connexion, whose result proved unhappy, though her prospects at the time were specious, and promised wealth, independence, and lasting contentment; yet the guilt of him to whom she had, as she imagined, for life united her destiny, soon severed this ill-assorted union, and destroyed in a moment her fairest prospects of felicity. Scarcely had she been three months this man's wife, when another appeared, with prior claim, demanding his perjured vows, and claiming his name and affection. The deceived bride only waited for the injured wife to substantiate her just claim, when she fled, filled with horror and indignation, the villain's polluting arms, and resigned his name, and abjured his vows for ever.

Lady Courteney, just wedded to sir

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Richard,

Richard, received her with compassionate tenderness, reinstated her in her former place about her person, and to the hour of her death, continued to regard her more as a faithful friend than humble attendant. Sensible even of the advantage her maternal care might prove to her only daughter, with her expiring breath she exacted of sir Richard a promise, that he would never separate Fanny O'Grady from Geraldine.

The baronet, holding tenaciously to this sacred engagement, continued the faithful woman in his household, as governess to Miss Courteney, though his present lady (with whom her candid temper and indignant spirit rendered her no favourite) frequently regarded with a jealous and invidious eye his confidence in her tried integrity, and the unshaken attachment of the young lady to this worthy woman.

On the following day lady Courteney was so much indisposed, from the unusual fatigue she had sustained during the entertainment,

tertainment, or from some other cause, that she did not rise till towards evening, when her wan cheek and contracted brow, and the shuddering horror with which she turned from the closet, gave indication that she had not forgotten the warning voice, whose solemn echo still rang in her terror-struck ear like the knell of death. Seated in the drawing-room, and encouraged by the presence of her family, the impression of terror which this strange occurrence produced on her mind, by insensible degrees wore away, and she began to imagine it must be an illusion of the senses, or a trick put on her by some individual of the family. As this last suggestion presented itself to her mind, her temper flamed with rising passion, and coming to a determined resolution that such juggling artifice should not pass unpunished, she resolved she would forthwith investigate the matter. At night, however, when alone in her chamber, lady Courteney, whose nerves were probably weakened by indisposition, felt

felt an indescribable awe, that rendered her unable to undertake such scrutinous examination ; but dreading to hear again the sound of the mysterious voice, she hastily retreated from the door of the closet, which she had not power to open, to a distant corner of the apartment, where she performed her evening orisons.

In the morning, however, when the brightening sun, by his cheerful influence, had dispelled from her terrified mind all the gloomy spectres of fear, she entered on a close examination of the closet, yet to no purpose ; for after the most exact and diligent search, she could discover nothing to strengthen her idea of trick or artifice—nothing to confirm her conjecture of its being an illusion by which her senses might be imposed on. Had a person, with intent to alarm her, gained access to the closet, there was there no hiding-place, or secret recess, to screen him from observation ; and to the adjoining apartment, even admitting the sound could be conveyed

veyed through the wall, no one, lady Courteney was well aware, could obtain admission without her knowledge, it being a store-room, that contained her medicinal chest, cordial waters, and other salutary restoratives, of which she herself alone kept the key; after having, therefore, maturely weighed all these considerations in her secret thoughts, the affrighted lady felt herself compelled to reject every idea of trick or fraud played on her, and to trace the origin of this extraordinary occurrence to a higher and more awful cause.

As the suspicion of all artifice faded from her mind, the idea of its being a divine warning gathered strength, and made her shudder; she became thoughtful and dejected, yet, as if anxious to fly her own thoughts, sought company with unusual avidity; and when alone, redoubled her devotions, endeavouring, by prayer and contemplation, to lull to rest her fears, and subdue her terrors.

CHAPTER III.  
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Others apart sat on a hill retired,  
In thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high  
Of providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate,  
Fixed fate, freewill, foreknowledge absolute,  
And found no end, in wandering mazes lost.

MILTON.

MAJOR Blandford, who with the other officers of a neighbouring garrison-town, had been invited to Dermont Castle on occasion of the ball and rejoicings, had for the first time seen Geraldine. Charmed with the artless graces of the young beauty, his admiration was fervid and enthusiastic, his attentions marked and particular; and when, after a few hours of rapturous idolatry, he retired to bed in the same intoxicating delirium, it was only to recall to his mind the charming vision

vision of the fair enslaver, and to devise means of frequent interviews with her, in which he might unrestrained pour forth his ecstatic adoration.

Sir Richard Courteney, of a noble and ancient family, had been in the early part of his life equally distinguished for magnificence and hospitality; but lady Courteney, of grave deportment and austere manners, was well known to be an enemy to all mirth and hilarity, and to have no welcome for visitors of a gay stamp at the castle, where she persevered to maintain a sullen state and awful grandeur. Yet not discouraged by these unpromising circumstances, major Blandford hastened on the following day to pay his *devoirs* to the ladies, determined that nothing short of a rude and stern rebuff on the part of the austere mistress, should restrain him from visiting at Dermont Castle.

Indisposed all the morning, lady Courteney was not visible, and by her absence gave major Blandford an opportunity of entertaining

entertaining Miss Courteney apart, while sir Richard read the newspaper, or conversed with a gentleman who was present on the politics of the day.

This indisposition of the lady happily supplied the major with an excuse for renewing his visit the next morning, to inquire after her health, which polite attention on his part did not fail to procure on hers a most gracious reception. Low-spirited, and willing to relieve the disquietude of her thoughts by fixing them on external objects, lady Courteney entered into conversation with major Blandford; yet unable to withdraw her attention from the pious reflections in which alone she found delight and satisfaction, her conversation naturally reverted from the vain and pompous pleasures of the entertainment to the pure joys of a true Christian.—“How sinful and profane,” observed she, “are all these rejoicings! They bear too great an analogy, major Blandford, to pagan idolatry to be acceptable to the Lord of  
the



the righteous, or any thing short of an abomination in his sight. It is by prayer and thanksgiving we should express our satisfaction that the Nimrod of these days is shorn of his strength, and his horn-beam obscured in captivity."

"That, madam," answered major Blandford, "would be indeed Christian-like rejoicing."

"Yes, sir; it is alone by such spiritual rejoicings," replied the lady, elevating her eyes, and gracefully waving as she spoke her fair hand, which alternately rested on her bosom, or was extended towards him in impressive manner: it is by the circumcision of the proud heart—by the lopping off of our inordinate desires—by modesty of exterior and sobriety of thought, we attain that *'righteousness which alone exalleth a nation.'*"

"And the defect of which in France, madam, has delivered over that unhappy country to the spoil of other nations," returned the obsequious major.

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“The abandonment of which among ourselves, sir, may expose us in God’s wrath to still greater calamities,” rejoined lady Courteney. “Buonaparte, impelled by his destiny, and without any knowledge of the true light, is not so accountable for the manifold crimes he has committed, as our nation, to whom such extraordinary lights and divine graces have been given. He is only, as I have heard many learned persons observe, an instrument in the Lord’s hand for the chastisement of others: being therefore pre-ordained from all eternity as a scourge for the ungodly, he cannot be responsible for the crimes he has committed, and of which he has only been the mere agent.”

“To your superior knowledge on this point, my lady,” said the major, “I am willing to bow acquiescence: for really I must acknowledge, to my utter confusion, my instructions on religious matters have been so defective, or I have paid so little attention to these instructions, that I am shamefully

shamefully ignorant on the subject. I must however do myself the justice to declare, I am open to conviction, and not without docility for advice."

"And this docile disposition, sir, I assure you, is the first grace of the elect, and the happy earnest of their future salvation. It softens their hearts to the impression of Gospel truths, and prepares them for arriving at that holy state in which the sanctimonious appear the chosen of God, and are in the absolute impossibility of committing further evil."

"Are there, madam, any such who during their probationary state here can arrive at such a high degree of perfection?" inquired major Blandford, who was willing, by a seeming desire for information, to insinuate himself into the good graces of the pious lady.

"Unquestionably, sir: the elect, predestined from all eternity to be saved, cannot fall into sin, and are certainly exempt from error."

"Yet

“ Yet man, my lady, in his nature prone to error, I thought liable to sin, and that it was only through mercy in the Redeemer, and repentance in himself, he could be saved. I have not, however, thought deeply, or perhaps correctly, on the subject; but I am anxious for information, and desirous to attend to your instructions.”

“ It may not be amiss for you, sir,” replied the lady. “ We are the chosen few, who possess the saving faith, and are unquestionably called, as were the Israelites, and are born to be saved; but for those unhappy persons who cling to a superstitious worship, and make images, as the idolatrous Jews did the golden calf, to bow to, or those impenitent sinners whose hearts God hardened as he did that of Pharoah, and who remain unmindful of the word of the Lord, through the organ of inspired preachers, there is no hope for them of salvation; but like the Canaanites and Hethites, and other unbelieving nations,

nations, they deserve to be delivered to the sword here, and to eternal punishments hereafter."

"There are, however, madam, many superstitious persons who are induced to embrace the true faith, and many sinners who are suddenly converted: what do you think of them?"

"Such conversions have been from the first ordained, and are the pure effects of the divine mercy towards these privileged persons. *He who possesseth God walketh in the liberty of the Gospels.*"

"But may not all alike, madam, partake of the divine mercy?"

"By no means, sir; there are only a certain number predestined from all eternity to be saved; and who, no matter what the nature of their deeds may be, shall certainly attain salvation."

"Pardon me, my lady, if I venture to declare, that I think such selection would argue injustice in the Divinity, who owes, I imagine, equal grace to all."

"It

“ It is not the less certain, however, sir. We have seen or heard of momentary conversions, without any effort on the part of the sinners, but who from the moment they undergo this happy change, and put on the new man, become invulnerable to temptation; and who, though their actions may sometimes appear of a dubious nature to the sons of men, are yet guided by the Divine Spirit, and incapable of evil.”

*Can such proud arrogance, one might on this occasion demand, be compatible with the humiliation of a true Christian, who feels his inherent propensity to evil, and is sensible he can only, till he puts off human nature, be restrained from sin by grace?*

Major Blandford fearful, however, of giving offence to the lady, should he seem to doubt the truth of her position, answered.—“ How happy, madam, should I esteem myself, if, after the utmost attention to your charitable instructions, and  
zealous

zealous efforts on my own part, I dare rank among this privileged number !”

This was sufficient to procure major Blandford an invitation from lady Courteney to benefit of the instructions of the itinerant preachers who constantly visited the castle, and of which invitation the gallant officer, with what pious motive I will not be bound to declare, seemed most willing to avail himself.

CHAPTER IV.  
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Not grace or zeal, love only was my call.

Porn.

No half-gentlewoman, desirous of increasing her consequence, by visiting at Dermont Castle; no manufacturer's plump wife, swelling with self-importance, and anxious to shew her fine clothes among great people; no mantuamaker, tailor, or shoemaker, bidding fair for custom, was more regular in attendance on the preachers than major Blandford, or seemed more deeply moved by their pious exhortations; yet, not sufficiently satisfied with the instructions derived from their enlightened discourse, he sought a further exposition of their doctrines from the pious lady of the castle, with whom he occasionally held long conversations on orthodox tenets.

Could



Could lady Courteney, whose proselyting spirit carried her to the wretched hovels of the poor, and gave an air of mild graciousness to her demeanour in her transactions with the comfortable, resist such an appeal to her pious zealousness, inspiring, at the same time, the hope of major Blandford's conversion, and gratifying self-love with her own merit in the deed? By no means; her exceeding great charity induced her to lend every support to his weak faith, in gaining the path of truth, and flying the company of the wicked.

While major Blandford paid this diligent court to lady Courteney and the preachers, he was not entirely an observer of the assiduities due to a lovely young girl, whose presence alone was sufficient to inspire rapture, and the power of whose irresistible charms mingled something of *earthly* with the *celestial* love inspired by the pious discourse of the elder lady.

Minds even of opposite natures will  
D 2 insensibly

insensibly partake of their respective dispositions by collision; hence, while major Blandford caught the fire of religious devotion from the holy conversation of lady Courteney, he so far inspired her with the spirit of the world, as to cause her, in defiance of her established code of morality, to permit Miss Courteney, under the guidance of another lady, to attend a garrison ball, given by the officers; thus daringly exposing to temptations, which it might be supposed, from her own careful avoidance, she felt unable to resist, an innocent young creature, of tender heart, and flexible disposition.

Pious dames, that fly the circle of pleasure as the most powerful incentive to vice, and who imagine it is there alone the fire of the passions rages with greatest fury, ought to be careful how they expose their daughters, unsustained by maternal support, to the dangerous ordeal. If the experience of their more matured years teach them to consider these pleasures as  
criminal,

criminal, why suffer to participate in them, with all the inexperience of youth, their children? It may indeed be dangerous to seclude young people from these amusements entirely, as such severe restraints never fail to create in the vigorous mind a higher zest for the interdicted pleasure; but it cannot be less so to permit their free indulgence without a proper guide. A less rigid morality in other parents instructs them to believe, that pleasure in itself is not so criminal as that inordinate attachment to it, which renders it an object of such interesting pursuit, that every duty becomes subservient; on the contrary, a reasonable enjoyment, in relaxing the mind, gives it redoubled energy; it smooths the rugged paths of life, and prevents duty from becoming toilsome.

More than three weeks passed away, during which major Blandford was regular in his visits at Dermont Castle; and Miss Courteney was occasionally permit-

ted to appear abroad, and mingle in gay parties. Accustomed hitherto only to the society of persons of grave and religious conversation (for though sir Richard was of unbounded hospitality, and frequently entertained the gentlemen of the neighbourhood, lady Courteney rarely condescended to appear at table on these occasions), the imagination of the youthful Geraldine was dazzled by these brilliant and lively amusements; and her attention, withdrawn from more serious subjects, was quite captivated by the gallant discourse of major Blandford. The moment he appeared, his presence created a lively interest in her bosom; if he approached not, her eye involuntarily pursued him, and she sunk into unconscious dejection; but when he drew near, her countenance kindled into smiles; and if he touched her hand, her heart trembled with an emotion undefinable to herself, and she cast down her eyes in blushing confusion.

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These symptoms of a growing passion were not unobserved by major Blandford, who, encouraged by the flattering hope to which they gave birth, avowed the tender sentiments with which her charms had inspired him. Though thrilling with pleasure, quite abashed, the trembling girl averted her head in silent confusion; on which the lover, alarmed lest in this declaration he had presumed too much, threw himself on his knees to implore her pardon and pity.

He was in this attitude when the drawing-room door opened, and lady Courtney entered. Chagrined at such unwelcome intrusion, the major started from his knees in visible disorder; while, in the agitation and distress that the confused and timid Geraldine suffered, she could scarce preserve herself from sinking to the floor.

**"For shame, major Blandford!" exclaimed lady Courteney, glancing at him with an air of indignant contempt; "why**

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**profane,**

profane, by this act of humble prostration to a silly girl, the homage which is due to the Divinity alone? And you, Geraldine," she continued, as she majestically waved her hand for the young lady to retire, "how could you so far forget the modesty of your sex, and the respect due to your parents, as to listen to such nonsense? Retire, child, to your chamber, and there study a more maidenly line of conduct."

The blushing Geraldine, impatient to escape the severe eye of lady Courteney, availed herself of this permission, and instantly retired.

"And now, sir," said the incensed matron, again turning an angry eye on the culprit lover, "suffer me to ask you, did you imagine, when I permitted your visits here, I could suppose you capable, by your artful insinuations with a mere child, of disturbing our domestic quiet?"

Major Blandford, struggling in vain to overcome his embarrassment, began an apologetic

apologetic address, which the lady indignantly interrupted, by saying — “ With unsuspecting confidence, major Blandford, sir Richard Courteney permitted your visits to Dermont Castle, little suspecting that you would abuse his hospitality, and with insidious artifice try to steal into the heart of his daughter. For that daughter, sir, he has other views. Propriety therefore dictates to me the necessity of intimating at once to you, that your visits shall in future be dispensed with at the castle, till you change your designs, or Miss Courteney is disposed of to another.”

Major Blandford, relying a good deal on the persuasiveness of his address, endeavoured to pacify lady Courteney, by assurances that the sentiments he entertained for Miss Courteney, excited by her extraordinary beauty, were involuntary; that ignorant of sir Richard's views respecting his daughter, and urged by passion, he was incautiously led to express his admiration of the young lady, which

freedom having excited her displeasure, he had just flung himself on his knees, to implore pardon for his temerity, when her ladyship entered; that so far from presuming to encourage the least hope of any return, he feared having rather excited, beyond forgiveness, Miss Courteney's displeasure, which, with the indignation of her ladyship, would be sufficient to drive him to despair. He therefore implored her to have compassion on him for an error that was involuntary, and not by a relentless cruelty, on the present occasion, shut out all hope of his future conversion, which the wisdom and piety of her conversation would not fail in good time to effect, promising, with solemn asseveration, that he should in future, if she did not now deprive him of her society, maintain such a control over his feelings as to give her no further cause of displeasure.

Major Blandford pleaded ineffectually; though he called up the potency of prayers and sighs to his aid, the lady remained inexorable,



inexorable, and he was obliged to depart without permission to repeat his visits at the castle, unless on those occasions when sir Richard entertained gentlemen, and the ladies were invisible.

Meantime Geraldine had retired to her chamber, in a state of inexpressible agitation. Though alarmed with the dread of having excited her parent's displeasure in lending a willing ear to professions of adoration from major Blandford, yet delight at the idea of knowing herself beloved predominated over every apprehension; and her heart, fluttering in her bosom, alternately swelled high with the most delicious hope, or sunk into dejection and despair.

A hasty summons to attend lady Courteney in her dressing-room, though it might promise a speedy termination to suspense, did not contribute in the least to allay her emotions; it was only with faltering step, blushing timidity, and an unusual trepidation, which she found it

impossible to overcome, that she appeared in the presence of that lady, and waited in trembling silence her mandate.

“How could you, Geraldine,” said the incensed mother, after an alarming pause, in a tone of great severity; “so far forget the duty of a child as to listen to vows of love, pretended love, from major Blandford, without the approbation of your parents? Sir Richard, who has no notion of suffering you to throw yourself away on a needy adventurer, orders you to think of him no more, or only with that just contempt which the man’s base designs on your fortune merit. - He was not unacquainted with your being heiress to the Plunket estate; and to that alone, child, you must attribute all the pretended homage he has paid your beauty. Your father, though unwilling, out of regard to your character, to come to an open rupture with major Blandford, has interdicted his visits here in future, and ordered you, whenever you chance to  
meet

meet him elsewhere, to treat him with all the disregard and indifference he merits. You may now return to your chamber, and there, no longer deceived by self-love, learn to appreciate more properly the compliments paid you on your beauty, which, were you portionless, or but moderately endowed, would cease to attract or charm."

Geraldine on this retired, not to meditate the humiliating lesson recommended by her sage mamma, but to arraign the justice of that mamma's present conduct, in her treatment and accusation of major Blandford.

For the last three weeks that gentleman had been the declared favourite of lady Courteney, and was admitted to all her select parties. When he was present, she seemed to regard, with increasing complaisance, his assiduities to her daughter, and appeared willing to encourage in the young lady a favourable return, by the warmth of her eulogiums in his absence.

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The sudden change, therefore, which had taken place in her sentiments, with regard to major Blandford, unauthorized as it seemed by any impropriety on his part, and without any previous intimation on hers, appeared to the young lady as unreasonable as it was extraordinary; and so far did she feel herself from giving into lady Courteney's opinion, that she conceived she was rather bound by a love of justice to value still more highly the person who became in this manner the victim of an unjust and arbitrary caprice.

Parents who are willing to preserve the authority which nature has given them over their children, should be careful to avoid all inconsistency; that authority should gather strength from the influence of reason, and prove mild in its sway from the force of affection; when governed by caprice, or swayed by passion, it loses its ascendancy over the youthful mind, and remains but an empty shadow.

CHAP.

CHAPTER V.  
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Since the birth of Cain, the first male child,  
To him that did but yesterday suspire,  
There was not such a gracious creature born.  
But now will canker sorrow eat my bud,  
And chase the native beauty from his cheek,  
And he will look as hollow as a ghost.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE two following days, major Blandford presented himself at the castle gate; but lady Courteney, having ordered herself and sir Richard to be denied, he was obliged to retire without gaining admission.

From a little turret at the south-west angle of the castle, whither she was now retired to sketch a view that had that morning particularly struck her, Geraldine beheld her lover depart, despair in his  
sunk

sunk eye (over which the heavy brow fell gloomily impending), chagrin in his reluctant step, and overwhelmed with dejection. Her compassionate heart became instantly softened at the sight of his disappointment and distress—her bosom heaved with a tender sigh, and her eyes filled with tears, as she hurried, regardless of the beauteous scene she was about to delineate, from the turret to her chamber.

Fanny O'Grady, who was seated in the apartment occupied with some needlework, perceived her emotion as soon as she entered, and found no difficulty in divining the true cause. Unwilling however to notice or sooth her affliction, which sympathy or opposition might, she rightly judged, only tend to increase, she more prudently sought to give a new turn to her thoughts by diverting her attention to other objects; and with this friendly intent, began to expatiate on the beautiful trimming at which she was employed, and which, for elegance of design, must cer-  
tainly

tainly surpass any thing of the kind that would appear for the season. Nothing, to the keen eye of the penetrating Fanny, appeared more easy than the quick transit of a young lady's thoughts from a gallant beau to a gay dress, or would prove more likely than the possession of the latter to dispel her chagrin on the loss of the former.

This sagacious woman had already observed Geraldine's predilection in favour of major Blandford, but conceiving it nothing more than the captivation of the imagination, and that the heart remained untouched, she hoped the transient emotion would expire of itself, if not inflamed by resistance. Not willing, therefore, to suppose him a person capable of creating any very lively interest, she affected not to perceive he was refused admission to the castle, and by this means gave the young lady no opportunity of complaint on the subject; on the contrary, assuming a gay air, she declared she must exert all her

her energies to have the beautiful trimming complete against the next castle ball, which she hoped sir Richard would not fail to give, on the arrival of captain Plunket from the Continent.

"Why, when do you suppose he will arrive?" inquired Geraldine.

"Immediately I should imagine," answered Fanny. "Has he given no intimation of the time we might expect him in his letter of this morning?"

"I have not heard there has been any letter from Charles Plunket," rejoined Geraldine.

"That is somewhat extraordinary," observed, after a short pause, the musing O'Grady: "but I am positive there has been a letter; I am too well acquainted with captain Plunket's hand to be mistaken; it was certainly his writing was on the superscription of the first letter which I saw sir Richard draw from the postbag this morning, while I waited in the breakfast-parlour for the pattern of this  
this



this trimming. Do, my dear child, inquire how he is, and when we may expect his arrival?"

"It may be so," said Geraldine; "for I have heard very little about my cousin Plunket since lady Courteney intimated to him that our correspondence was useless, as it only served to take off my attention from more necessary objects, and that my replying to his letters consumed the time which ought to be devoted to more serious studies; I must know, however, from my father when we may expect Charles."

"Do, my dear Geraldine, and that without delay, I entreat you. I am provoked that captain Plunket's letters should be considered of so little importance as to remain unannounced to the family, by all of whom he is so much beloved, and to whom his presence here will be so welcome. Poor Charles Plunket!" and indignant tears rushed to the affectionate woman's eyes at this tender ejaculation,  
"he

“ he lost his best friend, my dear young lady, when he lost your mother.”

Geraldine, from her very infancy tenderly attached to her absent kinsman, partook of Fanny's uneasiness, and hastened without delay to seek sir Richard, to inquire of him some particulars relative to captain Plunket. The baronet had rode ont, and Geraldine, reluctant to demand of lady Courteney (who had before passed very severe strictures on the freedom of her correspondence with that young gentleman) any information on the subject, confined her uneasy apprehensions to her own bosom, and soon forgot, in vain conjectures as to what could be the cause of her father's silence concerning captain Plunket's letter, every idea of major Blandford, and his sudden dismissal by her angry mamma from the castle.

Before the bell rang for dinner, the impatient girl, with good natured solicitude, hastened to join her father in his dressing-room, that she might satisfy her curiosity  
relative

relative to the letter he had received from Charles Plunket; but how poignant was her concern, how great her surprise, when, in reply to her interrogatories, he testily said—"Charles Plunket is an unworthy fellow. I have lavished my kindness on an ingrate; let me hear no more about him, Geraldine."

"My dear papa! it cannot be: what unfortunate misunderstanding makes you think thus unkindly of my cousin?"

"Speak not in his defence, Geraldine; my opinion of his conduct is founded on unquestionable evidence."

"Some vile calumniator, dear papa, has deceived you; Charles could not be unworthy or ungrateful."

"Do you dare, Geraldine," demanded sir Richard in an angry tone, "question what I advance? or have you the temerity, miss, after I forbid it, to take the defence of an ungrateful fellow against your own father? Let me hear, as you value my regard, no more on this hateful subject,"

Geraldine,

Geraldine, intimidated by this angry reproof, was awed into silence; but the gushing tears which swelled to her mild blue eyes, proved her reluctance to subscribe to his hasty opinion.

In the afternoon she was obliged to attend lady Courteney to a neighbouring town to hear a preacher; she deferred therefore making this unpleasant communication to the good-natured Fanny, whom she knew it would seriously disturb, till she would have retired for the night to her chamber, when she should be at liberty to add sympathy to complaint, and to soothe as well as afflict her generous companion.

"Some base assassin, my dear child," replied the indignant woman, on Geraldine's recounting her father's angry response to her inquiries, "has stabbed at the reputation of the noble youth, with malign intent to injure him in the opinion of sir Richard. He could be guilty of no act that would merit the appellation of unworthy or ungrateful. Your father is imposed

imposed on; some vile calumniator has traduced your poor friendless cousin; and without the protection or indulgence of parents, he is probably denied an opportunity of justifying himself."

"I am afraid," replied Geraldine, "the case is just as you state it. You know, my dear Fanny, my father's inflexible temper on many occasions."

"Yes; and to that inflexible temper, and the cursed machinations of some designing person, I am afraid Charles Plunket will fall a victim. How would it afflict my dear lady, if in the state of bliss to which her virtues have now elevated her she could be susceptible of affliction, to know this dear boy, in whose veins her own noble blood circulates, should be affronted by such foul suspicions! But Charles Plunket, I know him well, is incapable of evil or dishonour."

"I am convinced of it," replied Geraldine, "and still hope my father will not close his ears against reason; but allow me,

me, after the first violent ebullition of passion shall be over, to plead for my injured cousin."

"I have little hope, my dear child," cried the weeping Fanny. "Charles became a second time an orphan when he lost your mother; and though possessing every virtue and good quality which might attach friends, and gain him the esteem and approbation of his acquaintances, he has enemies—deadly enemies, that will not fail to detract from his merit, and cease not to infuse the poison of suspicion into sir Richard's mind, till it ferments to the destruction of his hopes and the ruin of his fortunes."

"I can scarce think human nature would be so depraved, as that Charles should find enemies in this quarter, and in possession of my father's ear, where he has always been so active in rendering one kind service or another."

"Such is the world, my dear young lady. Those on whose gratitude the de-  
serving

serving have the strongest claim, are often found the most ungrateful; yet I can scarce conceive the being that could be so ill-disposed as deliberately to injure Charles Plunket, in whose composition, from a very child, no malignant quality infused its baleful influence to interrupt the divine harmony of his noble nature. How many instances could I recount of the dear boy's generous disposition, since he came a suppliant, at eight years old, to solicit your parents' protection!"

"Was Charles so young when he lost both his parents?"

"Just eight years old—no more; the time and circumstance I remember as correctly as what happened but yesterday. It was about two months before your birth; your mother was somewhat indisposed, and I was employed at the time in attendance on her in the drawing-room in the town-house, where she and sir Richard were seated by the fire, on a cold night towards the end of October."

“I should like,” said Geraldine, “to hear an account of my cousin’s first introduction into the family.”

“And there is no person can give you a more circumstantial one than I,” replied Fanny. “I was standing at the back of my lady’s chair, when, after a thundering knock on the door, we heard with surprise (for she had ordered herself to be denied to every one) light feet on the stairs ascending. The door opened, when a slight young man of delicate features, and middling size, timidly entered; he was habited as a clergyman, and his mild countenance, which beamed evangelical charity and universal goodwill, was truly expressive of his divine mission. As he advanced with a modest and timid air, it was easy to account for the servant’s deviation from the general order and his admission; for a holy zeal towards God, with goodwill to man, preceded his steps, and pure affection, and profound reverence from all, gave him meeting.”

“As



“As this gentleman approached, he was immediately recognized by sir Richard and lady Courteney for a Mr. Selby, the only son of a gentleman ranking high in the law courts, but still more distinguished for the benevolence of his heart, and his pure love of justice, than his professional talents. He intended his son for the bar, but the young man, carrying his views beyond the dignities of this world, was solicitous to become an interpreter of divine, not human laws—a counsellor desirous to advise and instruct in God’s holy word, and an advocate for penitent hearts. Instead, therefore, of the lawyer’s gown, he assumed the parson’s cassock, without hope of preferment in the church, or any other object in view than the exaltation of God’s holy name, and the edification of God’s sinful creatures. Carefully avoiding the example of these indolent pastors, who for a good living had insinuated themselves into the church, he did not confine himself to the mere duties of his pastoral office,

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office, but constantly undertook works of supererogation; and not limiting his zeal to the narrow boundaries of a parish (where it sometimes happens that the pastor fleeces, not feeds the flock), he took a wider range, and, after the example of the apostles, became an organ of his divine master's holy word to others on a more extended scale.

“ Nor was it spiritual aid alone this charitable man supplied; for the poor became an altar on which he continually sacrificed to God, not only the superfluities of his state, but what might be said to take from that which his necessities required. Neither was he, in the performance of these benevolent deeds, guided, as many pious zealots are, by party spirit, nor impelled, like the present lady Courteney, by a love of proselyting: when necessity urged the claim, he inquired not into their religious creed; it was enough to know they were his fellow-creatures in distress, and required his assistance.

“ I have

“I have been thus minute, my dear child, in my delineation of Mr. Selby’s character, as well out of regard to the man who first introduced Charles to the notice of your parents, as to prove to you the imperfection of human nature, since this truly good man, taking private judgment for guide, is become a sectary !

‘I am come, lady Courteney,’ said Mr. Selby, as he softly advanced, and led by the hand a lovely boy, about eight years old, all drowned in tears—‘I am come, strange as it may seem, a suppliant to your favour for a saint in heaven. This sweet boy’s mother has just paid the debt of nature, and such, madam, was the pious resignation with which she yielded her last breath, that I feel fully justified in affirming she is now a saint in heaven. She required not my spiritual aid ; for another clergyman, summoned to her support, had preceded me in that holy office: it was one of those accidental occurrences which the world calls chance, but which an over-

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ruling

ruling Providence directs, with my desire of rendering spiritual consolation to a dying person, that introduced me to the lady; but instead of giving, I received instruction; for before she cast off this veil of mortality, her hopes so centered in, and her desires were all so fixed on, her heavenly country, that she appeared even in this lower world a beatified spirit. One link of nature's chain still bound her to the earth in this dear infant,' he continued, presenting the child: 'she desired of life only time to claim for him your protection; that failing, she committed him to my charge, and requested that I would seek from lady Courteney's generous kindness future support for the orphan child of colonel Plunket.'

'Colonel Plunket's child!' exclaimed my lady; and as she spoke, her beauteous face became pale and flushed by turns—can this be colonel Plunket's child?—my kinsman's child!—what need then of a suppliant for my protection? Come to  
my

my heart, dear boy ! where nature shall prove your best advocate, and plead most powerfully in your favour.'

" Your mother, Geraldine, took the child, and with an affection truly maternal, pressed him to her heart and bosom ; while a tear from her full eye, mingling with the copious stream from his, flowed to the memory of his noble father. Sir Richard rose in the meantime, and paid his compliments to Mr. Selby, whom he invited to take a chair near the fire.—' I would rather go back to poor, dear, sick mamma,' sobbed the sweet child, piteously, as he retreated from lady Courteney's tender embraces.—' I will be your own mamma, sweet boy ! and love you most dearly : then will you not stay with me, my darling little fellow ?' asked your mother.—' How could I stay from poor, dear, sick mamma,' demanded the interesting child, ' and she so sad and sorrowful ? You are to be sure a good lady, but I could not leave poor mamma for all that,

who, when she cried so bitterly for dear papa, used to kiss and hug me, and say I was her only comfort.'—'Your mamma, my dear child,' said Mr. Selby, 'is gone to heaven to your papa, and she sent you by me to this good lady.'—'I wish she had taken me with her,' cried the weeping boy; 'but sure, sir, Agatha said mamma was asleep, and I must go with you not to disturb her, and Agatha is too good to tell an untruth, I am certain.'—'Agatha deceived you, my dear child,' returned Mr. Selby, in a soothing tone, and taking the boy's hand in a kind manner: 'it was, however, with a good intention; for your mother now sleeps in death, and her spirit is gone to join your father's in heaven.'—'And shall I, sir, never see my dear mamma more?' inquired the child, weeping bitterly.

"Your mother, clasping him to her breast in an affectionate embrace, sought to restrain his sorrow—sir Richard, taking his little hand, spoke comfort to him—and  
I, de-

I, depending on my talent of amusing children, pressed forward with offered consolation: ineffectual, however, were all our efforts to restrain his grief, till he discharged his overloaded heart by weeping profusely.

“After the first violent gush of tears, Mr. Selby undertook to pacify the boy, by assurances that he had now no cause to weep, as his mamma’s pain and suffering were all over, but rather to rejoice that she was at rest with his papa, and a happy saint in heaven.

‘I am glad, sir, poor dear mamma is out of pain, but am I never more to see her?’—‘You shall see her, my dear child, when you go to God,’ replied the pious man, ‘but in this world never.’

“A fresh flow of tears, accompanied by sobs that seemed to rend his little heart, burst forth at this reply, which we all by tender endearment laboured to repress, but for several minutes ineffectually; when recollecting himself at length, the interest-

ing child ceased to weep, and thus addressed lady Courteney—‘ My dear mamma used to tell me I must be very good to go to God—I now wish it more than ever; but as I have now no good mamma to tell me how, will you, dear lady, teach me?’—‘ Oh ! that I will, sweet boy !’ cried lady Courteney, kissing him, rapturously. ‘ Who could resist such a dear, interesting pleader ? You shall be my child, and I will be your mother; but tell me what are you called, sweet darling?’—‘ Charles, ma’am.’—‘ Charles!’ repeated my lady; ‘ you have then been named after your father, Charles. Charles Plunket,’ (and I alone, my dear child, could at that moment define the softened eye and tremulous tone with which she made this tender repetition), ‘ you shall be dear to my heart as any son to that of the most fond mother.’

‘ This child, lady Courteney, has a claim on our justice as well as our affection,’ observed sir Richard, with his usual integrity;



integrity; 'his father was your next of kin; and if you die without issue, the estate which we inherit from yours shall descend to his posterity.'

"In these words you see, my dear Geraldine," continued Fanny, "your father's willingness to allow Charles Plunket's claim on his protection; on which your mother answered—'You are perfectly right, sir Richard; we must, however, do ourselves the justice to observe that there needed not this consideration to induce us to receive the dear child with kindness. How I regret his unhappy mother did not survive, to be convinced of the tender affection with which we shall regard him, and the parental solicitude with which we shall feel it our duty to provide for his future establishment!'

'Suffer me to assure you, madam,' said Mr. Selby, 'that she enjoyed at her last moments the most perfect security on that head; for though not personally known to sir Richard or lady Courteney, she was,

by report, so well acquainted with his love of justice, and the benevolence of your tender heart, that she entertained no doubt of the child's meeting a truly kind and parental reception.'

"I have been thus prolix, my dear child," continued Mrs. O'Grady, "in detailing this interview, to prove to you the tender and affectionate regard with which Charles Plunket was received into this family, and the just claim he possesses on the protection of sir Richard, which some dangerous foe, invidious to the peace of both, would now endeavour to traverse.

"Mr. Selby presented lady Courteney with a letter from Charles's mother, penned by her almost-lifeless hand, and in which the dying saint recommended colonel Plunket's child to her protection. This letter was accompanied by some valuable trinkets, to be preserved for the boy (they were his sole inheritance), to whom they would one day become of inestimable value, on account of the parents  
who

who once owned them. What other effects the deceased lady possessed she had bequeathed to Agatha, the faithful woman who had attached herself to her adverse fortune.

“ Mr. Selby having thus executed for the dying lady this pious mission, and promising to call on the morrow to see the child, rose to take leave; and notwithstanding the pressing and united entreaties of sir Richard and lady Courteney to stay supper, would not be prevailed on (having some other benevolent object in view) to prolong further his visit.

“ While sir Richard withdrew to dispatch a confidential servant to an undertaker's, whom he was to charge with the care of having all due respect, befitting her high birth, rendered to the remains of the deceased lady, your mother and I tried every gentle art to sooth the sorrows of the weeping boy, each moment renewed at the recollection of his mother, and to win his affection. The violence of the child's  
grief,

grief, overcoming the natural desires of childhood, rendered him indifferent to all the delicacies of preserves and sweetmeats my lady ordered to be placed before him, and from which he turned with loathing and disrelish; this excessive grief only yielded to the powerful influence of sleep, that began at last to weigh down his heavy eyelids. Lady Courteney had ordered a bed to be made up for him in a large closet adjoining her own chamber, whither I now conveyed him; and though exhausted for want of rest, and sinking beneath the pressure of filial sorrow, the amiable boy, brought up habitually pious, would not seek repose till he had first recommended himself to the protection of his Heavenly Father, and prayed for the repose of his departed parents.

“ The affecting solemnity, my dear Geraldine, of the child’s deprecatory petition—the fervour of his filial piety, so unusual at his tender age, awakened feelings of the kindest sympathy in the compassionate heart

heart of my dear lady : the melting fluid swelled to her eyes, as she reiterated his prayer for the departed ; and in rapid currents streamed down her cheeks, as she blessed, and pressed with affectionate endearment the interesting boy to her maternal bosom."

The faithful O'Grady, softened at the recollection of the tender scene, shed tears to the memory of the deceased lady and the absent Charles ; and Geraldine, catching the soft infection from her governess's melting eye, felt the stray drops to trickle down her cheeks also.

CHAPTER VI.  
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————— Lo ! to sudden fate  
(Weave we the woof; the thread is spun)  
Half of thy heart we consecrate;  
(The web is wove; the work is done.)      GRAY.

GERALDINE was seated in the window, whither on her entrance into the chamber she had been drawn by the mild radiance of the moon, not yet within a few days of being full, but which, now environed by whole hosts of stars, appeared majestically resplendent. The pendent curtain fell over the back of her chair, and shrouded her from the rays of the candle that was placed on the dressing-table.

To Fanny, who gazed on her with swimming eyes, she appeared at that moment the very image of her beloved lady; the silence of the hour—the solitariness of the

the

the apartment—the solemnity of the scene, for the moon, though clear, shone on the sash with a sickly lustre, strengthened the illusion ; and she felt in the idea as if she could fall at her feet, and interrogate her as one come from the kingdom of spirits. Her heart was full, and innumerable were the painful thoughts which pressed on her recollection, and urged her to a spontaneous confidence, as she thus continued—  
“ The helpless situation of this orphan child created a powerful interest in the benign heart of my dear lady ; yet not alone compassion for his pitiable state, deprived at such tender years of both his parents, called forth her sympathy in his favour : she remembered with tenderness the father from whom he had sprung, descended from a younger branch of her own noble family. Bred up together, in childhood he had been her playmate, in youth her friend ; and for him alone her virgin heart” (and as Fanny spoke she sunk her voice to a low whisper) “ first felt a sentiment  
ment

ment more tender than kindred affection or friendship inspires—a sentiment which throbbed for years in secret consciousness within her breast, but which innate modesty permitted not to pass her lips. I saw it in the blush that suffused her lovely cheeks whenever he appeared, and in the sigh that her lips exhaled when he retired.

“ Charles Plunket, with the same pure transport with which a devotee of the Romish church would pay homage to a beautiful Madona, admired your mother ; but he never had the temerity to aspire, nor even in his most secret thoughts encourage a hope of a union with the rich heiress of the elder branch of his family. Highly gifted by nature, but unendowed by fortune, sterling merit was his sole inheritance ; and though of illustrious birth, yet destitute of that interest which might promote his advancement in the world, his own merit passed unnoticed, and the former high rank of his progenitors was forgotten.



forgotten. Of a warlike spirit like his ancestors, the natural bent of his genius inclined him to a military life; to win therefore rough glory by deeds of arms was the honourable career to which his daring soul aspired. But to him, however distinguished he might be as a brave man, military honours in this country, through the failure of political interest, were inaccessible; he therefore offered his services to Louis the Sixteenth, by whom he was well received, and appointed to high command in the Irish brigade.

“ Here he had served only a few years, during which he had so far distinguished himself by his valour and intrepidity as to be raised to the rank of colonel, when the French revolution commenced; and proceeding like a resistless torrent in its precipitous descent down a vast mountain, bade defiance to all restraints of reason and justice, and produced excesses more horrible than the very evils it was first intended to obviate.

“ Devoted

“Devoted to the royal cause, with the decapitation of Louis sunk the best hopes of colonel Plunket; but still attached to the family of the fallen monarch, he abandoned not, as too many of their adherents fatally did, France, while a single rallying point remained for the royalist to make stand at; and even when hopeless of rendering by his presence there any further service to the Bourbon party, he lingered, detained by love and compassion, till through chaotic confusion and demoniac fury, he bore away, at the hazard of his life, Mademoiselle de Liancourt, a young lady of distinguished rank, whose father, mother, and brothers, had already fallen victims to democratic rage.

“This young lady, filled with gratitude for the preservation of her life, which under Providence she owed to colonel Plunket’s heroic intrepidity, rewarded him with the gift of her hand (it was all she had to bestow), and accompanied him to Ireland. Here he obtained his military  
rank

rank in one of the numerous regiments then raising, and was soon after sent out to the Continent, to maintain the cause of kings, according to the Pitt system, against the French republicans. His fair bride, whose destiny, both by gratitude and love, was bound up in his, and to whom he now became by their late union her lawful, as he had been before her generous protector, forgetting the delicacy in which she was brought up, and the weakness of her sex, accompanied him abroad, and attended him in all his campaigns. She endured without murmur privations of every kind, and sustained with firmness the fatigue of long marches, as her attendant Agatha informed me; she more than shared, by the tenderness of her anxiety, the dangers to which her husband was exposed; and while he suffered from repeated wounds, soothed his pain by tender solicitude and unwearied attention: and when he fell in battle, unable to survive his loss, she pined in solitary widowhood,

hood, and only lingered out life to gain Ireland, where she hastened with a view of confiding her infant son to the protection of your mother.

“During the time colonel Plunket and his lady, after escaping the persecutions in France, passed in Dublin, your mother, Geraldine, purposely absented herself with a friend at the Lake of Killarney, to evade every chance of meeting with her cousin, in whose presence she might betray her concealed but still ardent affection. Years rolled on, and to no eye but mine was perceptible the disappointment which internally preyed on her spirits, and rendered her averse to every proposed matrimonial engagement: to me, however, was open every secret folding of her guileless heart, and with a pitying eye I could penetrate (though her tongue was silent as to the cause) the chagrin with which it was devoured.”

“My dear unhappy mother,” sighed Geraldine, “how pitiable thy fate in becoming  
coming

coming thus early a prey to a disappointed passion !”

“Hers, my dear Geraldine,” replied Fanny, interpreting the young lady’s sigh, “was no evanescent passion, inspired by the personal appearance and pleasing manners of a handsome young fellow, which absence might soon remove, and another handsome fellow replace. No, it was a tenderness founded on long intimacy, nurtured by esteem of virtue, and approved by reason, but carefully concealed by virgin modesty on her side ; on the other, if there existed, as I think there did, a reciprocal flame, it was regarded by Plunket as too daring a presumption to indulge.”

“What a pity,” exclaimed Geraldine, “some mutual friend did not in time explain their sentiments to each other !”

“Colonel Plunket, my dear child, was of such a high and noble spirit, that I really question whether he would have been willing to accept independence from  
even

even the woman he adored. He preferred the more daring part of carving out a fortune for himself by his sword, than contracting obligation to mortal."

"He refined too much on the virtue of an independent spirit," said Geraldine; "for where love is mutual, it matters not on which side may be the fortune."

"Not much," replied Fanny, "provided there is not on the other any sinister object; but as this may frequently be the case, and that it is at all times difficult to ascertain *it is not*, those marriages must certainly be the happiest which are formed in perfect equality of rank and fortune.

"Six or seven years after the marriage of colonel Plunket, my lady was induced, at the repeated solicitations of her friends, to give her hand to sir Richard Courteney, for whom, though he possessed not the first glowing affections of her youthful heart, she entertained a tender friendship. Though his talents scarce attained mediocrity, and that hers were versatile and transcendent,

transcendent, yet the goodness of his heart insensibly won her esteem, and his persevering assiduities drew her affection; she espoused him without regret, and had every prospect of enjoying happiness in the union. The fall in battle of her noble cousin was the first interruption to this felicity; it gave a shock to her tender heart, which called forth every exertion of reason to conceal under a forced serenity; but when, a few months after, the little Charles, the sole surviving remnant of the once-loved Phunket, was presented to her, how did his presence, and the strong likeness which he bore to his noble father, awaken every dormant feeling in her tender bosom! The love she once felt for the parent was all transferred to the orphan child; and you, my Geraldine, were not dearer to her maternal heart than your amiable cousin. Alas! you were too young at her early death to be sensible of, or to prize as you ought, her affection."

"But now, dear Fanny," interrupted  
VOL. I. F Geraldine,

Geraldine, "I am truly sensible of her loss, and miss an indulgent mother's affection. I well remember her; from you alone have I experienced the same melting affection she felt for her child; for, like her, you join to reproof tenderness and sorrow, and with endearment would win me from error."

"You were between seven and eight years old, my dear child, when you lost your valuable mother; and though you could not be sensible of her loss, you must remember her tenderness and affection: but you have no recollection, perhaps, that her death was sudden, and attended with extraordinary circumstances."

"How was that?" demanded Geraldine, eagerly. "Though I have occasionally inquired, I never could learn any particulars relative to my dear mother's dissolution. You have yourself, Fanny, been eager to shun this inquiry."

"It is a subject, my dear child," returned Fanny, "on which I never could  
enter



enter but with painful emotion—on which I cannot even reflect but with unceasing sorrow. To lose my dear lady after a lingering and painful illness, would have been in itself a subject of much grievous affliction; but to lose her in the full flush of health and the prime of her days, without notice of her indisposition, or being warned of her danger, how terrible! I can never think of it but with inbred horror, nor remember, without bitter and accusing regret, that I was absent.”

A convulsive sob impeded Fanny’s clear utterance, while Geraldine, deeply moved, waited with increased impatience her relation.

“It was in summer,” resumed the faithful woman, “and the whole family were established at the Black Rock for the benefit of sea-bathing. Charles Plunket was seized with the measles; and my lady, on discovering this disease, alarmed for your life, as you were at the time in a delicate state of health, committed him

to mine and his tutor's care, and with fatal haste departed for the castle. The dear lady left us in as good and perfect health as I ever remember her to have enjoyed—the castle stood at the distance of scarce two days journey—and at the end of six, when Charles's convalescence gave hope that we might speedily rejoin the family, we were shocked with the dreadful intelligence that death had not only seized our beloved lady, but the grave had hid her shrouded remains from our sight for ever.”

“ Good Heavens! how sudden!” exclaimed Geraldine, partaking at that moment of the deep anguish which appeared to rend the heart of Fanny. “ Of what malignant disease did my dear mother expire, that could have caused such precipitate interment?”

“ I know not,” answered the weeping O'Grady; “ all I know of her disease is harrowing conjecture. But well I know, my dear child, and to this moment pain,  
fully

fully remember, the dread horror with which we were seized on being made sensible that it was for the last time, at our late parting, we had gazed on her lovely face, over which the brightening smile of affection was wont to cheer us, but which was now never to beam another smile, or give us joyful welcome. As we recollected the tender interest about the sick Charles, which had given such strong expression to her mild countenance when but a few days back she left us, we could scarce persuade ourselves it could now be extinguished in endless night; that the rose, which had then bloomed on her cheek in vivid beauty, should now be withered in death, and the lustre of her eye quenched in the darkness of the tomb!

“In this utter desolation of sorrow, what a consolation should we have found it to have received her last sigh, or even to have wept over the loved remains! Ah! no, they were hid from our sight for ever, and at the agonizing thought our

tears streamed with redoubled violence. We were even denied the sad comfort of joining our sorrows with those of the family, sir Richard having peremptorily forbidden our return for a few weeks, till Charles would be perfectly restored, and all danger had ceased of spreading the infection. You cannot, dear Geraldine, forget our sad return to the castle, the bitter tears I shed over you, or poor Charles's uncontrollable sorrow."

"I remember it well," returned Geraldine, as she wiped off the filial tear drawn from her bright eye by the revived idea of her beloved mother; "and to your continual review, Fanny, of that dear parent's maternal affection, do I owe the perfect recollection I still bear of her form and manner."

"Your father, my dear child," resumed Fanny, "appeared to be deeply affected by the loss of his amiable lady; and Miss Freelove interdicted our speaking of her, for fear of augmenting his affliction. Miss  
Freelove

Freelove was a genteel young person, whose parents having died in very necessitous circumstances, left her a dependant on the world. She had for some years experienced all the bitterness and mortification of a dependent state, and had in that time frequently changed her patroness, when a lucky destiny, to use her own expression, introduced her to my excellent lady. Pitying her portionless and unprotected condition, your benevolent mother offered her an asylum in her house, where she soon learned, in ease and abundance, to lose all recollection of the miseries of straitened circumstances and abject dependence.

“ This person accompanied sir Richard and lady Courteney to the castle, the latter of whom appeared in perfect health till the last day of her journey, when she complained of great internal heat, accompanied with an uneasy sensation. Supposing it, however, only the effect of the painful anxiety she felt about Charles, and

the consequence of fatigue, she retired almost immediately on her arrival, in the hope a good night's rest would prove an infallible restorative. Miss Freelove was of the same opinion, for she recommended sir Richard, on seeing lady Courteney sink into a tranquil slumber, to retire to another apartment, and not disturb his lady. Not imagining her complaint of a serious nature, he did so, but at midnight was roused out of sleep by the ringing of my lady's bell, and on entering her chamber, was inexpressibly shocked on beholding her supported in bed between Miss Freelove and Kitty Hobbs, the upper housemaid, in the most excruciating agony. The internal heat, of which she had first complained, was now increased to an insupportable degree, and attended with acute pain. Sir Richard, almost distracted at this sight, rushed out to dispatch a courier in haste for the nearest physician, and then again flew back to her chamber. The family by this time were all alarmed,  
and

and the housekeeper, with other of the servants, in gloomy silence, and all drowned in tears, had now collected to the antichamber and my lady's apartment. From poor old Ellison, whom the sight of her kind mistress in this pitiable condition had nearly deprived of life, I learned the following particulars:—

“ On the re-entrance of sir Richard, the dear expiring lady beckoned him towards her, and motioning with her hand for the servants to withdraw, they all retired but Miss Freelove and the housekeeper.—‘ I feel I am dying, my dear sir Richard,’ says she, ‘ and that no power of medicine can save me.’

“ Your father, at these words quite overcome with sorrow, could only fling himself distractedly beside her, and groan out in sobs his anguish.—‘ No time, my dear husband, is to be lost,’ resumed your dying mother. ‘ I have certain favours to ask, certain promises to exact, before death seals my lips finally.’

“ Sir Richard, as he tenderly grasped her hand, promised faithfully to perform whatever she required, when, in broken voice, the dear lady continued—‘ Scarcely less dear to my maternal heart, sir Richard, is our own lovely daughter than that noble boy, the son of my kinsman. He is unendowed of fortune, and without parents or natural protectors. Continue to be to him a generous protector and kind father; become in fact his father, by the gift of your daughter’s hand, if their inclinations oppose not such union, when they attain maturity: so shall he then enjoy with her the fortune to which he would be entitled in case of her death without issue; so shall my spirit rest in peace, in the promised completion of what has long been the dearest object of my wishes, and it shall with greater pleasure welcome yours, after the faithful performance of this sacred engagement, in a happy eternity.’

“ Your father, Geraldine, as he wept  
on



on her clammy hand, pledged himself by a solemn vow to the performance of this sacred obligation; and your sainted mother smiled, though writhing in the painful agonies of death, at the fond hope of having her wishes in this point accomplished.—‘One word more, dear sir Richard,’ exclaimed, after a momentary pause, the generous lady; ‘never forget my faithful Fanny—secure her a provision for life—promise never to separate her from my daughter.’

“Sir Richard promised, and my lady was again about to speak, when articulation became suspended by violent convulsions, which so distorted and racked her delicate frame, that poor old Ellison, unable to support her, sunk quite exhausted by the bedside, and Kitty was called to her assistance.

“Your father meantime, distracted with grief and terror, rushed out of the chamber to dispatch a second, and after him a third messenger for the doctor; and then again

flew back to the apartment of the dying lady, from whose loved presence, though now agonizing him to torture, he could not bear to tear himself a moment.

“The violence of the convulsions soon overcame the lovely lady’s weak frame, and she expired before the arrival of the doctor. This man examined the body in presence of Miss Freelove, who suggested to him that lady Courteney, never having had that disorder, had in all probability caught the measles from Charles; that the anxiety which preyed on her mind had rendered them of bad quality; and having got a damp bed on the road, it chilled her blood, and caused the disease, instead of appearing on the exterior, to lurk in her heart, where it produced the convulsions that terminated her existence. The doctor (the nearest at the time to be procured), a village quack, and perhaps ignorant of the profession, and having, as I was afterwards informed, retired to bed in a state of inebriation, from which he was  
roused

roused before reason had resumed her seat, caught instantly at this suggestion, which he delivered again as his decided opinion, with advice that the interment should be expedited without delay, lest, from the heat of the weather, and the malignance of the disease, the body should drop to pieces."

Geraldine shuddered with horror as she tenderly exclaimed—"Oh, my poor dear mother!"

"The body was indeed black and strangely disfigured," continued Fanny, "so much so that the housekeeper (though she could with difficulty obtain a glimpse, as Miss Freelove would only permit Kitty to assist her in wrapping my lady in her last dress, and placing her in the coffin) declared to me she was so unlike her lovely self, that no mortal who ever knew her could now recollect her features, and that something worse than the measles had caused lady Courteney's death, was the general opinion."

"What

"What could Ellison mean? what could that something worse be?" inquired Geraldine, eagerly.

"I know not, my dear child," returned Fanny; "but the measles were merely mentioned, I should suppose, with a view of exciting a prejudice against Charles, as being the cause of my lady's death. That, however, could not have been the case, for I had a perfect recollection of your mother having had the measles; though Miss Freelove, when I said so, was much displeased, and advanced positively that lady Courteney herself, apprehending it from the moment she felt indisposed, had assured her it was only the scarletina with which she was before affected. Perhaps Miss Freelove thought so, or she might have had her own views in making these assertions."

Fanny sighed deeply as she spoke; a pause followed the sigh, and she sunk unconsciously into a fit of musing. Geraldine responded her sigh, then after a short pause

pause inquired—"What could have been their views, do you think, Fanny?"

"I know not, my dear child," replied Fanny, roused by the question from her reverie, and heaving a sigh so profound that it amounted to a groan, at which Geraldine started.

"What's the meaning of that deep sigh?" demanded the young lady, as she threw her arms affectionately round her governess, and rested her head on her bosom. "You appear oppressed by some painful recollections, my dear Fanny; why not communicate your thoughts freely?"

"I am grieved at the disgrace into which poor Charles is fallen with sir Richard," replied the affectionate O'Grady, as she returned Geraldine's kind embrace. "Had your angel mother lived, how would such a circumstance have afflicted her generous nature! but had she lived, such circumstance could not have occurred; for to no demerit in captain Plunket, I am  
not

not afraid to advance, but to the machinations of his enemies, is his present disgrace owing."

"Can you suspect lady Courteney to be Charles's enemy?" asked Geraldine, as she raised her head from Fanny's bosom, and gazed intently on her.

"I know it well," replied the other, in a tone and manner that seemed big with mighty meaning; "the mild spirit of religion has not yet been able to stifle at her heart the rancour she once entertained against your cousin; nor has the control, which severe discipline permits her to maintain over her feelings, been able at times to conceal this rancour."

"She was under great obligations to my mother, and decidedly attached to her, as I have often heard her declare," said Geraldine; "could this rancour then proceed from the prejudice she entertained against Charles, for having proved the cause of her friend's death, as she imagined?"

"No, child," replied Fanny, elevating her

her voice to a firm and determined tone, " I can trace it to a more certain origin. I know the moment at which it commenced, and the cause in which it originated. It was scarce two months after my dear lady's death, when one morning, as you, my poor innocent child, with Charles and his tutor, were assembled in the breakfast-parlour, waiting the morning repast, and expecting every moment the appearance of sir Richard. The door at length opened, and he entered, leading Miss Freelove, whom he introduced as lady Courteney, and whom he desired you, Geraldine, to receive as your future mother. You were then too young, my dear child, to be sensible of your irreparable loss, or feel at that moment as poor Charles did this direful change. Indignant at the insult offered to the memory of lady Courteney in this premature marriage, the blood rushed in a violent current from the dear boy's heart to his face ; and instead of the gratulation which the new-made lady

lady might have expected on the occasion, he involuntarily exclaimed—‘ *Not lady Courteney—not your mother, Geraldine,*’ as he flung himself, urged by uncontrollable grief and bursting scorn, out of the room.

“ Sir Richard, who knew the goodness of Plunket’s heart, and was well acquainted with his filial adoration of his late beloved patroness, was easily induced to pardon this failure of ceremony ; but the lady could never forget or forgive the disrespect it manifested.”

“ I have heard it constantly asserted,” said Geraldine, “ that it was my mother’s wish, in order to provide for her friend, that sir Richard should espouse her.”

“ Ay, so Miss Freelove and Kitty Hobbs would persuade the whole family to believe ; but Ellison, who was also present, heard not a word of the matter. They succeeded, however, in persuading sir Richard it was the case, and she accordingly appeared, in the short time I  
have



have already indicated, as lady Courteney."

"It was painful to you and Charles, my dear Fanny," said Geraldine, "to see my deceased mother's place so soon occupied by another; but as my father would certainly have married again, I might, you are aware, have got a mother less affectionate."

"True," replied Fanny; "therefore never forget, my dear child, the respect you owe your father, and her who now represents your once-venerated mother. If gratitude maintain any power over her heart, she ought to love, as the child of her own blood, the daughter of lady Courteney. But to what a late hour have we, Geraldine, unconsciously pursued this subject! See! the moon, which shone yonder so bright when we first sat, has disappeared entirely: let us follow its example, and retire to bed. Good-night, my dear child! may you always enjoy the peace of angels, and the protection of Heaven!"



without first propitiating *hers*, there was no certain passport to *his* *favour*, he considered it might be premature, till the first effervescence of her rage should subside, and she threw out of herself the flag of peace, to seek the baronet's mediation, which she would not fail to receive kindly, as soon as she felt predisposed, from her own proper will, for an accommodation.

In addition to this swelling hope, the sanguine major encouraged another not less pleasing; which was, that he had created a warm spark in the young lady's bosom, and that this spark, if not now inhumanly crushed in its birth, would kindle into a flame that could not be extinguished without some struggle; and when this flame (not opposed by reason, which at seventeen he judged to be very feeble, and fanned by the passions which he knew, from experience, to be then equally strong as the reasoning faculty was weak) would spring forth in despite  
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of all control, he imagined the *soft* baronet was of so tender a nature, and so idolized his only daughter, that he would be ready to sacrifice his wishes to her inclinations, rather than expose her to the pain of any great conflict with her feelings.

To preserve therefore the tender interest which his really-handsome figure had already created in Miss Courteney's heart, was now the grand object of all his thoughts; and whatever romantic enterprise the valorous spirit of daring knight could achieve, he was ready to undertake for that purpose.

As the shades of unentombed heroes were wont to wander on the confines of Elysium, so did, with restless spirit, this enamoured lover hover continually for some days about the interdicted grounds of the castle, in the hope of obtaining an interview with Geraldine; but which the authority of lady Courteney, and the anxious vigilance of Fanny O'Grady, equally conspired to prevent; when, mortified at  
not

not being able to evince to the fair lady his solicitude to behold her, he thought of writing; and though he could not promise himself the same success from an epistle, however tenderly couched, as from a personal interview, he resolved at last to commit his best hopes to the chance of a letter.

After a fervent invocation of the divinity of love, and after much profound deliberation, this love-fraught epistle was at length produced, and only waited a favourable opportunity for conveyance.

“Now,” thought he, “for a triple-armed dart from Cupid’s own quiver, on the point of which I would shoot this effusion of my tender thoughts to the feet of my charmed mistress, or for some light-winged messenger of the dove-tribe, who would fly with it to her soft bosom.”

While revolving this last thought, during a solitary ramble on the outskirts of the castle wood, major Blandford met Tom Pigeon (as ready a messenger, he  
then

then conceived, as any of the winged species) on his return from the post-office.

A gracious recognition on the part of major Blandford procured a most obsequious declination of the uncovered head from little Tom, who smirked at the jingle of the ready half-crown for drink, jerked suddenly from his *honour's* fingers to the *good fellow's* hat.

The major was so pleased with the grateful good-humour of the little post-boy on this occasion, that he drew forth another piece of coin, of double the value, which, with the letter for Miss Courteney that he entreated him to present, he pressed on his acceptance, when starting from the proffered gift, and with abhorrent dread and hasty precipitance repelling the extended hand, timorous Tom exclaimed—"Don't *timpt* me, your honour, for it goes against my grain to refuse so good a gentleman any thing he might require; and moreover, as I think, if she  
could

could get that letter, it would give my young lady so much satisfaction; but consider, your honour, it would be as much as my place and future bread are worth, to deliver to Miss Courteney, who is so great an heiress, a *love letter*."

"You can slip it unperceived into your young lady's hand, and no one shall be the wiser. Do, my good little fellow, and keep this piece of gold for my sake, as a token of my regard, and the proper sense I shall not fail to entertain of this obligation."

While major Blandford was speaking, he drew back the hand with the crown-piece, which he a second time extended with a gold half-guinea.

"I do, to be sure, wish well to your honour," replied friendly Tom, eyeing the gold eagerly; "and I would be so happy to have that little bit of gold as a token of your honour's regard for me; but do you think, sir, a poor boy's conscience is nothing, and that he would make no

scruple to put a trick on the good master whose bread he eats, and who clothes him? I could not bring myself to refuse so noble a gentleman any thing; and above all, as I know it would so please my young lady, who is a sweet good creature, and as merry as ever danced in shoe-leather; so don't ask me, your honour, to deceive my master."

"Do not think, honest Pigeon," said his honour, "that I would encourage you to deceive your worthy master: I know you, my good fellow, above such treachery; but there can be no harm, you know, in delivering this letter, which only contains, you may take the word of a gentleman for it, a good story, which I was about telling Miss Courteney, when lady Courteney got it into her head I was no longer of her sanctimonious fraternity, and forbade me the castle quite abruptly. Take it then, my honest fellow, and this pound-note, for your trouble."

"A pound-note, your honour!" exclaimed



claimed quiet Tom, whose alarmed conscience smoothed to instantaneous serenity at the sight of the soft paper. "A bank of Ireland note too!" repeated pleasant Tom, chuckling as he held this powerful quietus for troublesome scruples between his thumb and finger. "This letter, your honour says, and we must not doubt the word of an honourable gentleman, contains only a good story. Why then, as that is the case, and I am, you know, the letter-carrier of the family, there can be no great matter of harm in my delivering it for your honour." The postboy folded the bank-note carefully, and thrust it into his waistcoat pocket.—"But if sir Richard," says he, with renewed scruples, "should ever come to know I had any hand in bringing this letter——"

"It is not for sir Richard, man," interrupted the major, still extending the letter; "and how shall he know any thing of the matter?"

“ Miss Courteney, you know, sir, is a great heiress; and if I should lose my good place, your honour, and be discharged without a character!”

“ Do not mind that; I shall find you a better, my good fellow.”

“ I would like to *serve* your honour, 'tis sartain; but——”

“ Take this letter then, and give it unperceived to Miss Courteney.”

“ Well, though there is danger of a jail in the act, I was, your honour, always of so generous a disposition that I would venture my neck for a friend; but then I should like to have that bit of gold, by way of keepsake. The note I will change, and it will pass, like the letter, from my hand to some one else's; but the half-guinea I would have to look at, and it would put me in mind of so noble and generous a gentleman.”

“ What an avaricious rogue!” thought the major, as he slid the half-guinea after the  
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the bank-note into the hand of cunning Tom, who, spurring his little pony, cantered off whistling.

Major Blandford, though possessing too great prudence to be prodigal of money on trivial occasions, was well pleased, however, to pay thus handsomely for the delivery of a letter on which so much depended; and he retired, after this free disbursement of part of the contents of his purse, in an extremely-joyous humour, felicitating himself on the promised recompence he looked forward to enjoy in an interview with Miss Courteney; for such, and no less, was the modest request contained in his letter, and which interview he hoped to enjoy, perhaps that very evening, in a sequestered spot of the wood that environed the castle; and where he affirmed, each solitary day, since banished her loved presence, was passed in melancholy meditations, or fruitless wishes that chance might turn her steps into that direction.

Vain however were his expectations of this ecstatic meeting; though he fled at an early hour the circling glass, and all the charms of convivial mirth, to plunge into the deep gloom of the wood, there to feast in all the tumult of cherished hope on the delightful chimeras of the fancy, time lagged slowly on, and no Geraldine came, no fair enslaver appeared to revive expiring hope, and with encouraging smiles regale his drooping spirits.

Whether to attribute this cruel neglect to the indifference of the fair lady, or to the want of fidelity in honest Tom, became a dubious question with the disappointed major, and is what we have now to inquire.

Tom Pigeon, whose fingers itched to touch major Blandford's money from the first glimpse he had obtained of it, was quite indifferent with regard to the success, and undecided as to the delivery of the letter. Wholly absorbed in himself, this little fellow entertained not a particle  
of

of goodwill for any human being, but so far as it might regard his own more immediate interest; it was not therefore from liking to major Blandford, but to his money, he consented to convey the letter; not from fidelity to sir Richard, but the fear of losing a good place, he hesitated to deliver it; and not from attachment to the interest of captain Plunket, but the dread of incurring the resentment of his fellow-servants (with all of whom he knew that young gentleman to be so great a favourite, that they secretly encouraged a hope among themselves that he would one day become their master, by his union with Miss Courteney), he finally decided on the destruction of an epistle which might operate against his interest in that quarter.

Just as the postboy had come to this prudent resolution, he entered on the long avenue which led up through the wood to the castle; and as the pony

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stooped

stooped his head to his accustomed drink, the rider dropped (after first putting a pebble into the open fold of the envelope, to weigh it to the bottom) the letter into the running stream.—“ I am already paid the postage, so there it goes,” said Tom, “ and with it all fear of detection. He would be a foolish blockhead, indeed, who would risk a good place for any man’s pleasure.”

If the demon of mischief, in the form of Tom Pigeon, was thus working against the interest of major Blandford, the angel of death was busily employed in his favour in another quarter; and though the postboy cast away this letter, his bag contained another which would equally operate, though in an indirect way, to the lover’s advantage. This was an epistle for Fanny O’Grady, the steady friend, and warm advocate with her young lady, of captain Plunket, containing an account that her mother, who had been for some  
time

time indisposed, was in the last extremity, and required, before death, her daughter's attendance.

It was vexatious to this faithful woman to separate from the innocent Geraldine at this dangerous moment, when she feared major Blandford might have created some interest in her youthful bosom ; and nothing short of the summons of an expiring parent could have constrained her to abandon her lovely charge on this occasion. She enjoyed indeed a latent satisfaction in the idea that this gentleman was no longer the same distinguished favourite with lady Courteney as at their first acquaintance ; and that being forbid the castle, he would not in any accidental meeting possess Miss Courteney's ear as usual, and therefore could not, through this little organ, so accessible to tender tales, make good his way to her feeling heart. Yet, not able to subdue entirely the anxiety which weighed heavy on her apprehensive mind, she thus exclaimed,

as she held Geraldine in her affectionate arms at parting—"Guard carefully, my dear child, your imagination from all wandering and impatience, since, through the mere deviations of the fancy, young people not unfrequently lose their control over the heart, and are precipitated into error. Remember, that your angelic mother, who now observes you from the realms of bliss, destined from your very infancy your hand for the noble youth who is far away, and who alone is truly worthy of such a gift, because from childhood he loved you, and he alone, Geraldine, knows how to estimate your worth. Sir Richard shall not break his engagement with my dying lady; her wishes respecting you and Charles shall be accomplished; for though calumny, with malevolent aim, has now spread a cloud over his fair virtues, he shall emerge from that envious cloud (trust me, dear child, who know him) bright and spotless as the sun at noon-day." A tear from Fanny's eye fell on Geraldine's



Geraldine's cheek; she kissed it off as she repeated — " God bless you, my sweet love! May Heaven preserve you! My heart is torn with prophetic fears that rend it at our unwelcome separation. Why am I constrained to leave you, dear child of my affection? But a mother's dying commands must be obeyed. Nothing of less imperative necessity should separate us. Yet, though I shall be far away, cease not, dear Geraldine, to bear a strong recollection of what I have said to you; and, as you value happiness here, and hope for bliss hereafter, disappoint not the wishes of your sainted mother. To bestow your affection on any other than captain Plunket, would afflict, if the dead can know aught of sorrow, your mother in the grave, and would break the heart of her who by affection is your second mother."

" My dearest Fanny," replied Geraldine, as she smiled through her tears, " why all this sorrow at our short separation ?

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tion? Be comforted—your mother will get better. You shall soon return, and your Geraldine shall not disappoint your wishes.”

“Heaven reward you, my dear girl, for that assurance!” prayed Fanny, as she disengaged her arms from around the delicate form of Miss Courteney, “and bless you with that true happiness of which only the pure of heart is susceptible!”

CHAPTER VIII.  
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————— There's something in his soul,  
O'er which his melancholy sits on brood ;  
And I do doubt the hatch, and the disclose,  
Will be some danger. SHAKESPEARE.

GERALDINE, who from her very infancy had been accustomed to the society of the faithful Fanny, felt the day lag heavily on in her absence, and at night retired solitary and depressed to her apartment. Here, whatever might have been the little grievances of the day, the cheering presence of this affectionate woman never failed to dispel them ; for in her encouraging kindness the young lady reposed that confidence which the reserved manners of lady Courteney repelled, and in her endearing tenderness found that indulgence which the austere principles of the other

other denied: so that, in frank and unreserved communication, she could pour out to this friendly monitress every thought of her heart, and in mildness and docility receive reproof and admonition, with tender caresses from her lips.

The second day of Mrs. O'Grady's absence, sombre as the first, wore, as it advanced, a still more lowering aspect; for lady Courteney, on whose solemn brow hung grave reprehension, after being invisible a great part of the morning, appeared at dinner gloomy as a wintry day wrapt in black clouds portentous of a coming storm. The timid Geraldine, awed by such depressing gloom into silence, looked sad, which the sagacious lady, with a significant nod at the baronet, while the beam of her eye was directed towards the dejected young lady, observed and interpreted into sullenness and disappointment.

The dinner passed over in sullen state; the covers were removed, and the servants withdrawn,

withdrawn, when lady Courteney, breaking the gloomy silence which still prevailed, ordered Miss Courteney, instead of her usual walk, which she imperatively forbade, to retire to her chamber.

The astonished Geraldine, sensibly hurt at having her liberty thus contemptuously restrained, demanded the cause of this extraordinary prohibition.

“When a young lady,” answered the indignant matron, in a tone of great severity, “so far forgets the respect due to her parents, and the honour of her sex, as to receive intimation of an appointment in a retired part of the wood, with a gentleman denied admission to her father’s house, it is full time her parents should exert the authority derived from God to prevent such improper meeting.”

“You astonish me, madam! what meeting—what appointment do you speak of? who has dared to advance I have had such intimation?” demanded Geraldine.

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“You have seen the letter, sir Richard,” cried lady Courteney, “which I picked up in the wood, and of which I am convinced no person dare to break the seal but Miss Courteney, and you now behold the unblushing confidence with which the young lady affects to know nothing of the matter.”

“I know of no letter, madam,” interrupted Geraldine with warmth. “I have received no letter of the purport of which you intimate; and if I did, I should know how to treat it with the contempt it merits.”

“Your asserting you received no letter, gives me just cause, young lady, to doubt whatever you assert. The letter to which I allude was addressed to you by major Blandford; I found it in the very walk leading to the place of assignation; and on perceiving the superscription, in which I immediately recognized the major’s handwriting, I thought myself fully justified,

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as the seal was already broken, to satisfy a mother's anxious curiosity in seeing what it contained."

"Such letter might have been written, madam; but, upon my honour," said Geraldine, laying her hand impressively on her bosom, "I received it not."

"Oh, very truly indeed!" exclaimed lady Courteney, with an air and tone of determined incredulity.

"My dear papa! you will not discredit my assertion," pleaded Geraldine. "You never believed me capable of a falsehood."

"No, child, you never told me an untruth in your whole life, I am certain."

"How credulous you are, sir Richard!" said the lady, haughtily. "You know nothing of the wiles of the female heart; pray leave to me these investigations. For you, young lady, you may now retire to your chamber."

At this permission, Geraldine, indignant of such undeserving reproach, and disdaining all further defence, silently withdrew.

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In her apartment, however, was now no friendly associate to enliven her solitude—no maternal counsellor to encourage her (after the first burst of indignation would be over to which the warm-hearted Fanny never failed to give way) to submit with mild acquiescence to the authority of a parent, which, however stretched too far, it was always, as she carefully inculcated, the duty of a child to obey. Geraldine, now deprived of this consolatory support, instead of seeking refuge from solitude in occupation, wept the absence of her sympathetic friend in her own lonely situation.

The windows of Miss Courteney's apartment overlooked the pleasure-grounds: from a verdant grass plat immediately underneath branched different walks through the shrubbery, one of which was terminated by an arbour, in full view of these windows, that the old gardener had constructed for his young lady, with an open parterre in front, where he had collected the

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the choicest flowers of the garden. The grey-headed man had fondled Geraldine when an infant, and he now delighted for her sake to keep in perfect order this parterre; where not a straggling stem was permitted to start from its companion, nor a withering flower to tarnish the beauty of its more blooming compeer. He had now, as usual, been paying his accustomed attention to this favourite spot, when perceiving Miss Courteney seated near the open window, he respectfully approached and invited her to descend, that he might shew her what a fine blow of early carnations was just ready to replace her ranunculus.—“Not at present; I cannot go now, good Parsley,” replied Geraldine.

Poor old Parsley was retiring quite disappointed, when perceiving, as he imagined, the traces of sorrow on his young lady's cheek, he returned—“I have got, Miss Geraldine, some of the finest cherries of my favourite mayduke, finer by far

far than any went in for the dessert; will you not come down and eat some?"

"I cannot go down now, good Parsley," answered the softened Geraldine, in a tremulous tone, as the swelling current drawn forth by this kind attention again rushed to her moistened eyes. "I cannot go down just now; but I am not the less obliged for your kindness, than if I had partaken of the fruit, or seen the carnations."

The old man, dissatisfied with her refusal, hobbled off; yet depressed at sight of her seeming dejection, retired no further than the arbour, from whence he occasionally cast a glance on the window and Miss Courteney, who looked, as he thought, sorrowful and in tears.

Parsley, with whom Charles Plunket had ever been a favourite, had heard something whispered among his fellow-servants of sir Richard's displeasure against that young gentleman, and the prohibition  
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to his correspondence and future visits at the castle which he was likely to receive. To this displeasure in her father, and consequent prohibition of her kinsman's visits to the castle, the gardener now ascribed the sorrow which appeared to depress his young lady, and which, originating in a source that proved cause of general displeasure to the household, he respected her the more for her participation with their own feelings on the occasion.—“It would go nigh to break my old heart,” muttered he, “to see my good lady's favourite boy, and her own sweet daughter, made unhappy by any intruder. But God help the innocent! of what avail here is their uprightness of heart (unless in the sight of Him who penetrates all hearts) when cunning and malice are employed against them!”

The mind of the gardener, busily occupied in revolving like reflections, continued in this way to think aloud, while pursuing his favourite occupation; and as  
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his thoughts carried him back to scenes long past, the warm feelings of youth revived with the retrospect, glared in lightning from his sunk eye, and glowed in sudden and indignant flashes on his pale cheek.

Meantime Pigeon, at the suggestion of lady Courteney, had been summoned into the presence of sir Richard, where he was obliged to undergo a rigorous examination on the subject of major Blandford's letter. Tom, supposing the letter safe in the bottom of the stream from all detection, and that none but the devil himself could give information against him, denied, with oaths and solemn asseverations, all knowledge of, or hand in the matter.

Lady Courteney, with well-affected composure, permitted him to proceed in this negation, till she perceived that sir Richard, overcome by his continued affirmations to the contrary, began to doubt his having actually conveyed the letter;  
when

when entering on the examination herself, she put to the culprit such home questions, and called forth to his recollection such pointed circumstances, as obliged him, thus closely pressed, to throw himself on the compassion of the baronet, and make a full avowal.

Having however denied the truth at first, he obtained not now with his auditors the credit he deserved for this candid acknowledgment; but was supposed to equivocate still when he asserted, that filled with remorse for having been induced to take charge of this letter, and apprehending the bad consequences it might produce in the family, instead of delivering it to Miss Courteney, out of respect to whom he had determined to be silent on the matter, or returning it to major Blandford, who might readily procure another messenger, he had dropt it in the stream.

Sir Richard, simple of heart, and of such easy credulity that it required no  
great

great degree of cleverness to impose on his good nature, appeared ready to yield implicit faith to this last account, as his lady could perceive by his relaxing countenance; but this clear-sighted dame, possessed of a more acute penetration than her husband, saw nothing in Tom Pigeon's detail of how he disposed of the letter, but the same prevarication which marked so fully his first denial of having received it from major Blandford: dismissing him therefore with a grave and angry rebuke, she dropt such observations on the shuffling conduct of the fellow, as caused the *sagacious* baronet to remark, as if he had made the discovery himself, that the postboy for his veracity *was entitled to no credit*.

Meantime the evening, with Geraldine in her solitary apartment, lingered on tedious and unoccupied till summoned to tea, at which she appeared with swoln face and eyes red from weeping.

Sir Richard, softened at her dejected appearance,

appearance, regarded her with tender compassion, and lady Courteney's severe countenance seemed to relax into something like sympathy.—“My dear Geraldine,” said she, taking her hand with kindness, “you know I have no interest nearer my heart than that of your happiness; and if I am compelled to treat you with seeming harshness, be assured it is only for your good, and that my disposition is averse to such treatment. I should indeed, my dear child, be rendered quite miserable for the rest of my days, were I to see your youth, beauty, and fine estate, thrown away on a mere fortune-hunter, of which dangerous class major Blandford is, you may be certain.”

“Strange,” exclaimed Geraldine, in a tone of irony, “that your ladyship, with whom for the last month he has been such a distinguished favourite, could have been so imposed on! I regret the discovery only as it brings into discredit your ladyship's penetration.”

Geraldine, whose feelings were quick, felt indignant at the restraint which had been imposed on her, and full of resentment for the suspicions entertained of her having received major Blandford's letter; unmindful therefore of the respect due to a parent, and only regarding the inconsistency of that parent's opinion with regard to major Blandford, and the injustice of her conduct with regard to herself, she gave way to her indignation in this smart retort.

Lady Courteney was irritated, but subduing every impulse to anger by Christian meekness, with a composed brow and gentle modulation of the voice, she answered.—“Indifferent, my dear child, as to the estimation in which my penetration may be held, I rejoice in the discovery which gives you timely warning to guard against the flattery of a designing and dangerous man, who sought you, without the least regard to your merit or charms, for the  
large



large fortune which he knows you entitled to possess."

"That might or might not be the case, madam," replied Geraldine, spiritedly; "but it does not from hence follow that I encouraged his addresses, or received his letters."

"Appearances, my dear Geraldine, argued strongly against you, and you must excuse on that account my inference."

"You had no cause to doubt my word, madam."

"No, my dear child," returned lady Courteney, with a gracious smile; "but I am well aware that in affairs of a tender nature, a certain delicacy imposes a restraint on female minds, which candour cannot always overcome."

"Your ladyship had never any reason to doubt my truth or candour," said Geraldine, indignantly.

"Lady Courteney, my dear Geraldine, is your friend," interposed sir Richard, taking

taking his daughter's hand affectionately ;  
“ consider her as such. She has always had your interest at heart, and has fully discharged towards you the duties of an affectionate mother: in gratitude then, and for my sake, dear child, let no petulance on your part now create any misunderstanding between you.”

The good baronet placed his daughter's hand which he held in his wife's, who, throwing the arm that was disengaged round Geraldine, folded her to her bosom, exclaiming, as she kissed her cheek—“ My dearest child! you know not how tenderly I love you—you can never know it: suffer however the tenderness of my affection to be my excuse for the anxious solicitude which has excited your displeasure.”

The appearance of the servant with the tea-urn gave another turn to the conversation, which lady Courteney seemed now willing to drop; and Geraldine, though still irritated at the doubt entertained of her  
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her veracity, was compelled to silence on the subject, without being able to enter on a further justification of herself: she was also reluctantly constrained to receive from her mother terms of conciliation, which on her part she really felt not, and was unwilling to meet.

The tea over, this affectionate mother, again fondling Geraldine with renewed maternal endearments, recommended her to take a turn with her father in the garden, while she retired to instruct her little boy in his nightly orisons; after which she would, as the night was very fine, join them in a moonlight ramble. Geraldine, restored in some measure by these affectionate caresses to revived vivacity, taking sir Richard's arm, tripped lightly to the garden; and disdaining to avail herself of an opportunity of vindication with one parent, which the unsuspecting confidence of the other supplied her with, till that other would be present also, she reverted not

once to the charge against her of having received major Blandford's letter, but chatted gayly away on indifferent subjects.

Scarce had they gained in this way the utmost extremity of the garden, when a hasty summons from within recalled sir Richard to the castle; and Geraldine, left to her own thoughts, pursued her solitary walk in silence and meditation. Turning into an alley, darkened by the deep shade of tall filbert trees, she met the gardener. Though restored in a great measure to her usual serenity, the retiring of her father having left her again to the freedom of her own thoughts, threw her back into her former dejection, and the traces of inward disturbance became once more perceptible on her intelligent countenance.

They escaped not the keen gaze of the old man as he approached, and his heart sympathized in her sorrows—"It is now too late, Miss Geraldine," said he, "to look  
look

look at the carnations ; but the cherries are still to the good : wont you come till I gather you some ?”

“ I have no relish for them now, good Parsley,” answered Geraldine, in a desponding tone.

“ You used to like cherries, my dear young lady,” cried Parsley, who gazed as he spoke with an air of tender compassion on her dejected countenance. “ I hope nothing unpleasant has happened that might spoil your relish for good fruit, or prevent your enjoying my fine blow of carnations.”

“ Nothing of any consequence, Parsley,” replied Geraldine, while an involuntary sigh, that struggled from under the pressure of a heavy load on her heart, escaping at the same moment her lips, contradicted the assertion.

The old gardener, moved equally by grief and indignation at hearing his young lady sigh, returned—“ God help you, poor

innocent ! as the lamb that is led forth by the butcher to slaughter, so are you heedless of your present situation. I see it, and the dangers that beset you—I tremble for your safety—yet, base coward that I am, I dread to warn you of what may be, poor child ! your destruction.”

“ What, good Parsley, can possibly threaten me with destruction ?” inquired the amazed Geraldine, with rising emotion.

“ Alas ! your danger seems to me but too certain, lady ; yet I fear to tell you. Would to God your faithful friend, Mrs. O’Grady, had not left you !”

“ Mrs. O’Grady, you know, will soon return ; but what danger do you apprehend to menace me in the interim ?”

“ A danger that I greatly fear, and of which I would wish to warn you—yet I may be wrong ; and though I were not, and that you actually stood on the brink of fate, yet knowing little more than the suggestions

suggestions of my own foolish fancy, I know not how to tell you what I think, young lady."

"You alarm me, Parsley," said Geraldine, with increasing emotion. "If any danger is impending over me, you need not hesitate to impart your fears: you may rely on my prudence."

"You have need, young lady (and you may take an old man's word, who has seen more than he is willing to speak of), you have need, I say, of greater caution than you can possibly possess at your tender age, to ward off the snares that on every side surround you. I would be willing to put you on your guard against these snares; but it is as much as my life is worth to speak on certain matters."

"Fear not, Parsley," replied Geraldine; "you may rely on my secrecy, and trust me: torture should not wring from me whatever you repose in confidence."

"No, Miss, you would not blab, I am certain; but could you command, when

sore, your seelings? when foul suspicion of a person would lurk at your heart, could you meet that person with unsuspecting confidence? when wrath for hidden wrongs would swell your breast, could you conceal it under a smiling countenance?"

"I believe not," answered Geraldine. "I have not that absolute command over my feelings which would enable me to perform a part so deceitful."

"Then shun, lady, the confidence you seek: I dare repose it in your heart alone; there it should be concealed from all suspicion, otherwise it might betray you to your ruin."

The gardener turned away as if willing to avoid further conversation; but Geraldine, trembling with foreboding disquietude, and urged by painful curiosity, followed and laid her hand on his arm.—  
"Stay, good Parsley," said she, "after having excited a terror which I cannot suppress, and awakened a curiosity torturing to restrain, you are not now going  
to



to leave me a prey to suspense and anxiety."

"It is dangerous to trust you, lady. When the cold feelings of age, growing out of respect and duty, are difficult to be kept within bounds, how shall those of youth, flowing too from nature, and joining filial affection with compassion, be overcome? Impossible! you must not therefore be made acquainted with circumstances that would make your blood boil, and which could only serve to render you unhappy—ay, and perhaps draw on your innocent head a destiny that silence and prudence may ward off from you."

"And why, Parsley," demanded Geraldine, impatiently, "excite, if you meant not to gratify, a curiosity that shall now make me quite unhappy? You have raised doubts in my mind that will constantly distract me; you have awakened fears to which the serenity of my days will be sacrificed."

"I am a poor, doting old fool, young  
H 6 lady,

lady, and am to blame for entering on this subject, which has, after all, no existence but in my own crazed brain," said the grey-headed gardener, as he stopt suddenly short, and with eyes swimming in tears gazed sorrowfully on Geraldine: "but pardon me, dear lady, for having disturbed you, when the truth was, I could not resist the indignation that seized on my heart when I witnessed your lone and silent sorrow, and thought of your mother. In her good father's house the best days of my life were passed, and from his bounty I acquired comfort and independence. On his death I followed my young lady here, and was happy in her service. Enjoying so long her and your grandfather's protection, I was attached to their memory, and for their sakes am concerned for your happiness. This it was that foolishly betrayed me to use such incautious expressions, and of which, as having no signification, I would wish you to retain no recollection. I would lay down my life to

to

to promote your happiness, but I am afraid the confidence you desire would not ensure your peace or comfort."

"If danger is impending, would it not be well," inquired Geraldine, "to be advertised in due time, that I might guard against it? In such a case would you leave a doubt on my mind, good Parsley?"

"I can't say that I know of any danger threatening you, sweet lady; and if I did, at the risk of my life would I snatch you from such danger: but your mother's early fate is continually present to my mind; and who shall say, I sometimes think, poor innocent child, that it might not be yours also?"

"Death, you know, Parsley, is the common lot of all mankind; it is an event which nothing can avert—against which no mortal can guard."

"It is, lady; but your mother's death," he continued, in an awful tone, and sinking his voice to a whisper, "was sudden  
and

and mysterious—so sudden that there *was* those who thought she came not fairly by it; and this, dear lady, is the secret nearest my heart; guard it in yours from all inquiry.”

“ Did my father entertain any suspicion of so horrible a nature ?” inquired Geraldine.

“ No, lady ; your father is noble and unsuspecting. Incapable of evil himself, suspicion of others does not creep into his mind ; and those who possessed his confidence, persuaded him it was otherwise.”

“ Nor should such fell suspicion,” rejoined the trembling Geraldine, “ gain admission to any person’s mind on trivial causes. Had you, Parsley, of this horrid event any substantial proof—any thing more than mere suspicion ?”

“ No, my lady : but these suspicions were strong, of a nature almost amounting to proof, and corroborated by circumstances. If I dared rely on your prudence, I would trust them to your keeping.”

“ Fear

“Fear not, Parsley; I will be equally guarded to conceal your secret, and the indignant feelings it may give birth to. Be prompt then, and tell me all you know about my mother.”

“Your mother was an angel on earth; and too surely there *was* those who envied her virtues, that sent her before her time to heaven; and observe me, lady, as the mother was served, just so might be the daughter. This is what causes my fears: be cautious then, and guard well your thoughts, young lady. There *is* *them* who at the very bottom of your heart can read them. But whisht; I hear some one coming: it is sir Richard and your stepmother. God bless you, miss! may the saints of Heaven have you in their holy keeping, and save you from all danger!”

The gardener disappeared through the trees, as the baronet and lady Courteney advanced towards Geraldine, who trembling with horror and alarm, and filled with

with foul suspicion at what she had just heard, appeared oppressed with sad gloom, and plunged in deep reverie.

**CHAPTER IX.**

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Ah! not the love, that should have blest'd  
So young, so innocent a breast ;  
Not the pure, open, prosperous love,  
That, pledged on earth and sealed above,  
Grows in the world's approving eyes,  
In friendship's smile and home's caress,  
Collecting all the heart's sweet ties  
Into one knot of happiness!

**MOORE.**

"Is that old Parsley, Geraldine, who was talking with you here, and disappeared so suddenly among the trees at our approach?" inquired lady Courteney. "From the gravity of your looks I should suppose he was in his usual croaking humour."

"He croaks, ma'am, when the magpies eat his cherries, or he has not a blow of flowers to please his fancy," replied Geraldine, in vain attempting to smile and assume an air of unconcern.

**"That**





## CHAPTER III

Ah! not the best, that comes our way  
 So young, so sweet, so true,  
 Not the pure, open, untroubled air  
 That, pledged on earth and sea,  
 Grows in the world's untroubled air.

Is friendship's sweetest name,  
 Collecting all the heart's sweetest,  
 Love and love's sweetest name.

"Is that old Parker, I thought, was  
 talking with you here, an old man,  
 suddenly coming to me, I was  
 surprised, I thought, I was

but  
 every  
 to hold  
 all those  
 iety; and  
 1vice, we  
 would

“That must then be the case very frequently,” rejoined her ladyship, “since he is for ever croaking. That old man has certainly never known the peace of a calm conscience; something always disturbs him—some secret sins, I should imagine, that he is unwilling to relinquish, for he never can be got to attend preaching.”

“He belongs not to your religious society, lady Courteney,” said sir Richard, “and is therefore the more to be commended for not attending a communion to which his faith is repugnant; he is however a strictly honest man, and has served me faithfully; and whatever his creed may be, I regard him for these qualities.”

“I am sure good old Parsley was never guilty, in his whole life, of any evil deed that could now disturb the peace of his conscience,” observed Geraldine, who felt much pleased with her father’s just defence of the gardener.

“It may be the case, Geraldine,” returned lady Courteney, with an air of seeming

seeming charity ; “ yet we have good reason to doubt the virtue of all those who shun religious discourses. These people enjoy perhaps a temporary calm in the dangerous quiet of their conscience ; they therefore fly the exhortations of the pious, lest being warned of their evil ways, they should be roused out of this calm, and awakened to a sense of their enormities. Whatever Parsley’s faith may be, we all know he could derive only improvement from attending to the learned and pious discourse of the preachers.”

“ His own religious creed, my lady, may teach him to think differently,” rejoined Geraldine ; “ and in the observance of that we all know him to be strict, regular, and attentive.”

“ Yes, child, I believe he is indeed ; but we owe a preference of regard on every occasion ; and we ought certainly to hold in a higher degree of estimation all those who are of our own religious society ; and if sir Richard would take my advice, we  
would

would throughout our household, and among our tradespeople, encourage the holy spirit and the life of grace, and be served only by such pious persons."

"And if I were to attend to such advice, lady Courteney," replied sir Richard, in a tone of firmness not usual with him, "we would be much worse served by your favourite proselytes than we are at present; for such selection in our household would only tend to encourage hypocrites and impostors, many of whom, as it is, in their canting and pretended zeal, cheat you of your money, and impose on your credulity. Parsley is a faithful servant; and while he lives, for no other, however religious, will I exchange the good old man."

Sir Richard Courteney's attachment to his old followers and faithful servants was truly patriarchal; he now spoke therefore in a decisive tone, like one tenacious in this point, and that was not to be warped from his opinion. This was a subject on  
which

which lady Courteney frequently tried, but never could, with all her address and unbounded influence, move him; and of this she was so fully aware, having on repeated occasions experienced not only denial but reproof, that she now dropt it without further discussion.

In the silence of the night and the solitude of her chamber, Geraldine's thoughts dwelt with painful uncertainty on the mysterious hints respecting the death of her mother, thrown out by the gardener. She recollected the circumstances attending her sudden death already mentioned by Fanny O'Grady; and she wished old Parsley, who must have been better informed of these circumstances, from his being in the castle at the time, had been more particular. She regretted the interruption given to their conversation by the appearance of sir Richard and lady Courteney at so critical a juncture, and though she felt impatient to meet the old man again, she feared on another occasion he

might

might not be so communicative. Was she then to remain in ignorance of how her mother came by her death, with a dreadful doubt hanging over her mind that it was unfairly, and tortured with the idea that the assassin who had raised such desperate hand against the parent's life might meditate the child's destruction also?

Geraldine's mind disagreeably occupied with like reflections, she could not hope to obtain rest, nor did she seek it; but seated at the same window where she and Fanny had been conversing on this very subject a few nights back, her thoughts gloomily revolved the sudden, and to her fatal deprivation of a mother, whose loss she was too young at the time to be fully sensible of, but of which she now, by painful contrast, felt the value. The night being excessively warm, the window at which she sat was still open, and as her head reclined against the back of the chair, and the filial tears stole down her cheeks unconsciously,

unconsciously, her eyes were fixed in pensive dejection on the calm scene without, to which the silvery beams of the full moon gave a softened lustre.

From this melancholy position, and the free indulgence of sombre thoughts, Geraldine was roused by the sudden appearance of a human figure, who, emerging from beneath the trees, glided softly into the walk beneath her window. The inhabitants of the castle, for some time retired to rest, were all, as she conjectured, sunk in deep sleep, and not now likely to be visible; alarmed therefore by the presence of this unknown person at so late an hour, she sprung from the chair to close the window, with prompt intention to retire. As she laid her hand on the sash for this purpose, the moon, not obscured in the open space by the shade of the trees, threw a brighter ray over the figure, in whom she instantly recognized major Blandford. Attracted by the light, and inspired by love and hope, he had approached

proached her chamber window, and as her delicate form now caught his impatient view, he exclaimed impetuously—"One moment! only hear me for one moment, lovely Miss Courteney, I beseech you."

Geraldine, trembling lest he should be heard, instead of letting fall the window-sash, motioned with her hand for him to retire.—"I cannot depart 'hence," he affirmed, "till I have a few words conversation with you; though my life were to pay the forfeit of my temerity."

"Hush! hush! for mercy's sake," softly murmured Geraldine, as she inclined her head out of the window; "you will be heard, and I shall be exposed to lady Courteney's displeasure."

"Not for worlds, lovely angel," the major responded in the same low tone, "would I wish that you should incur her displeasure, or be exposed to the anger of that artful termagant!"

He then pointed to the window underneath, at which he intimated they might converse



converse with freedom and ease, without fear of being overheard, and entreated she would descend for that purpose. Without daring to reply, she again motioned him away with her hand, and made an effort to close the window.—“Hear me but one moment, charming Geraldine!” cried Blandford in a less guarded voice.—“I want to speak to you of lady Courteney and the letter.”

The alarmed Geraldine arrested her hand in the act of letting fall the window-sash, and entreated he would speak with more caution. The major, not moved by her entreaties, urged her to descend where they might converse freely, while she, in return, continued her supplications that he would retire; but wanting resolution on her part to close the window, he persevered to hold with her the same parley, till terrified at the idea of his being overheard by the family, and no longer able to resist his persuasion, the weak girl had the temerity to descend to the library underneath,

derneath, where unclosing the window-shutters, and throwing up the sash, so as to permit them to converse freely, she gave to the importunities of her lover the meeting he desired.

It is humiliating to self-love to be thus compelled to acknowledge such indiscretion on the part of my heroine, who should unquestionably be, as all heroines of romance certainly are, quite faultless; candour, however, obliges me to state the truth; but then again, Christian charity permits me to plead, in extenuation of this error, that Geraldine was little more than seventeen, that dangerous age when the passions maintain such a powerful sway over the heart, and the conduct is more regulated by the imagination than by reason—that lady Courteney, in her system of education, attached more importance to appearances than to principles, concerning which she was quite indifferent, provided the exterior was decorous—that Fanny O'Grady, the young lady's watchful friend, whose

whose constant study it was to oppose solid truths to this pernicious system, was now absent—and that, without a confidential person to commune with, dark distrust had obtruded itself on her mind, and her feelings were roused to exasperation by unjust suspicions and ill treatment.

In the conversation which took place between the lovers at the window, major Blandford explained to Geraldine how he had taken the liberty to address her by letter, and which letter the postboy, at his solicitations, undertook to deliver; but pulling it out, as he informed the major, to be prepared to hand Miss Courteney, he was surprised by lady Courteney, and in the fright produced by her unexpected appearance, dropt it in the act of returning it to his pocket. This unlucky epistle was instantly picked up by the too observant lady, who not only opened it, as Geraldine had now good cause to suppose, but made of it a ready instrument for impressing on sir Richard's mind his

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daughter's

daughter's secret correspondence with major Blandford.

Indignant of the mean advantage taken of this affair, the incensed Geraldine gave way to the irritation which she felt against her stepdame; and which irritation, first aroused by her own confinement, and inflamed by the dark hints of the gardener, the subsequent conversation of major Blandford did not fail to increase. Encouraged, as he declared, by the complaisance with which lady Courteney had admitted his visits, and invited by the seeming confidence with which she had frequently committed Geraldine to his protection, he had given way to a passion, which daily gathering strength from this fatal indulgence, no exertion of reason on his part could now restrain.—“Was it,” he passionately demanded, while in a transport of wild despair he grasped the trembling girl's hand, “with malevolent intent to torture me like Tantalus, that lady Courteney presented to my fascinated  
view

view such irresistible charms—that she inspired me with such delicious hope, only to plunge me in utter despair, by withdrawing from my enraptured sight these bewitching charms, at the moment I felt their most potent effect, and when to gaze was rapture? Or could it be,” he continued, “to prove the undue ascendancy which her haughty spirit was determined to maintain over her hapless victims, that she has thus barbarously sported with our feelings?”

Geraldine, whose vanity had been flattered by the agreeable assiduities of major Blandford, and her imagination captivated by his handsome person, had really thought she felt for him an increasing interest grow in her bosom; and at his suggestion she now imagined that in lady Courteney it was a refinement in cruelty, equally indicative of a malevolent and domineering spirit, to permit this interest to gather strength in her heart, till it might become

too powerful for her reason ; and conceiving from hence, that to satiate this love of power in her despotic mother, she was in like manner condemned by her to practise the same painful lesson, she assented in a great measure to what the major advanced, or if she undertook her defence, it was feebly, without effort on her part, and on his productive of no effect.

This conversation, which the young lady made several fruitless attempts to break off, was continued till after the morning dawned, and enforced of itself the necessity of separating. The enamoured lover, however, could not be prevailed on to retire, till he had wrung from the trembling fair a half-reluctant consent to meet him in the same place on the following night, by gleam of friendly moonshine, when silence and repose would prevail throughout the castle ; then darting through the trees, he disappeared in an instant, while the now sadly conscious  
and

and apprehensive Geraldine stole, with slow and cautious steps, unperceived to her chamber.

Here, though shut up from every eye, the imprudent girl could not shut out accusing thought, or exclude painful reflections; but now left to her own meditations, she saw in its true colours, and arraigned with bitter remorse, the indiscretion of which she had been guilty in descending to converse with major Blandford. The dread of his being overheard had, it is true, urged her in part to this inconsiderate step; but she now perceived on reflection how much more prudent it would have been to have retired from view at first, and close the window-shutters, which act must have commanded his importunities to cease, and would have quieted her apprehensions. Instead, however, of redeeming this her first error, by repelling at once these secret attentions of major Blandford, she had been guilty of a second, and still greater indiscretion,

cretion, in the promise she gave him of another meeting. Severe self-reproaches on her imprudent conduct, thus crowding at every moment on her troubled mind, she in vain sought in sleep a quietus to uneasy reflections: though the exhaustion of nature weighed down her heavy eyelids, the secret workings of conscience forbade them to close in dewy slumber; and the consciousness of error, with the absence of the faithful Fanny O'Grady, whose presence would have preserved her from indiscretion, steeped them in tears of anguish and remorse.

How dearly does youth, innocent and virtuous, pay for its first fatal deviation into error! with what poignant remorse—with what bitter tears, does it bewail the guilty pleasures purchased at the sacrifice of duty! Delicious tears! happy remorse! bringing forth joy, that has power to arrest the erring in their imprudent career, or turn the guilty to repentance!

Thus wretched in her first lapse from  
prudence



prudence and discretion—thus bewailing her fault, the sorrowing Geraldine sunk at length into a transient oblivion of painful reflection, from which she was roused at a late hour by a summons to breakfast.

CHAPTER X.  
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She cares not for her father's tears,  
She feels not for her father's sighs,  
No voice but headstrong love she hears,  
And down the staircase swift she hies.

LEWIS.

WHILE Geraldine, urged with impatient haste at discovering she had slept so long, was hurrying on her clothes to descend to breakfast, she thought with regret on the occurrences of the past night; and resolved, in order to repair the error she had committed, in promising to give major Blandford the desired interview, to close her window-shutters before the family would retire to rest, and not make her appearance at the window on that night.

With determined resolve comes renewed serenity, giving force to good purpose,  
and

and chasing from her late-perturbed mind all uneasiness and perplexity; yet, when she descended to the breakfast-parlour, and that a father's good-natured smile gave her a cheerful welcome, her heart (it was full of tenderness and sensibility), softened by such endearing goodness, so unmerited on her part, again smote her at the painful sense of her indiscretion, and her eyes sunk abashed (for, guileless of thought, she was unpractised in deceit) under the fond gaze of a tender parent.

Lady Courteney appeared equally affectionate as the baronet in her reception of her daughter; but this affection, rather constrained than flowing from nature, and combining with seeming tenderness a greater degree of pity than esteem, proved more wounding to self-love than grateful to feeling. Coldness, neglect, and even scorn, the highly-susceptible Geraldine could have repelled with becoming pride, or borne with patient spirit; but this humiliating pity, with her own uneasy conscious-

ness of indiscretion, sunk her in her self-esteem to mean degeneracy, and produced a temporary indifference as to consequences.

It may sometimes prove dangerous to young people to forfeit, in their secret thoughts, all good opinion as to the correctness of their conduct; a want of respect for themselves, not unfrequently of dangerous tendency, may follow. It is what mothers should particularly guard against. Had lady Courteney, like the endearing Fanny, soothed the troubled mind of Geraldine to peace, by kind sympathy, she would have wound herself into her heart, and gained on her confidence; had she, instead of humbling her by injurious suspicions, reposed with seeming trust on the rectitude of her principles, she would have imposed on the young lady's honour the necessity of acting correctly; or had she joined melting kindness to mild reproof, and tender solicitude to force of reason, the gentle girl, unable to withstand such affection, would have thrown herself

herself on her mother's bosom, confessed her past error, and committed to her prudent guidance the future regulation of her conduct. How much better does that mother understand the true feelings of nature, who by endearment wins her child to frank confession, than she that by austerity restrains in the close-pent heart the labouring thoughts!

Instead of such endearment, the morning repast was no sooner over, and sir Richard withdrawn, than lady Courteney, with a supercilious presumption that argued in herself an entire exception from all human frailty, began a long lecture on the foolish vanity of young persons, who, conceiving themselves (and very often without any just pretensions) to be extraordinary beauties, take it into their silly heads that all the gross flatteries which men, having designs on their fortune, pour into their gratified ear, are downright truths, and the real homage to which their charms are entitled; while  
the

the good estate which their prudent ancestors may have provided for them, not the intelligence of the mind, or the beauty of the form, is the real magnet that attracts the lover's attention. Fortune with the generality of mankind she ever knew to be the grand object. There might no doubt occur some solitary instances where extraordinary mental endowments in the woman, with great piety and decorous demeanour, would so far operate on the mind of a virtuous man, who sought happiness in domestic life, as to make him, in consideration of these good qualities, overlook the want of wealth; but she never knew an instance where a young woman was entitled to a good estate, that her hand was sought for any other purpose than its possession.

To this sage lecture (delivered in a tone and manner to destroy its good effect, if for good effect it was intended) Geraldine listened with petulant impatience and reluctant attention; and when it was ended,  
instead.

instead of expressing her thanks for such *kind maternal advice*, made her escape, with a satisfaction she had neither art nor address to conceal, in eager haste to the garden.

Here Geraldine hoped to renew with Parsley the conversation which had taken place the evening before, and to which the presence of lady Courteney and her father had then given such untimely and unwelcome interruption; for this purpose she now sought him through every walk and alley of the garden, through hot-houses and fruitery; but Parsley was nowhere to be found, and his absence produced in her mind a still more restless and impatient curiosity. She inquired at length of the under-gardener where the old man might be had, and with increasing disquietude learned that he had been sent that morning to Mr. Summers, a gentleman of sir Richard's acquaintance, who resided at the distance of fifteen miles from the castle, and who had some time  
before

before sent to request the attendance of old Parsley to dress his pines, as his own gardener was ignorant of the culture of the pine-apple.—“ Her ladyship, miss,” added the man, “ would not suffer him to go at the time, though I am sure he could have been better spared than at present.”

From this concluding sentence sprung a prompt suggestion, which almost instantly rose to the mind of the young lady, that lady Courteney, suspecting her private conference with the gardener, and the nature of the information he could give, had dispatched him out of the way to prevent further communication.

Disappointed, in this manner, of the information which she had desired so impatiently, without her faithful Fanny to commune with, and her mind, from previous irritation, well disposed to admit injurious ideas of her mother, Geraldine, more curious than ever, became disquieted and unhappy. Dark suspicion, with its black train of gloomy forebodings, combining



binning past foul deeds with meditated injuries, intruded itself on her thoughts, conjured up terrific images to her affrighted fancy, and threw an air of sullenness and reserve over her naturally-frank manners.

Lady Courteney perceived this sudden change, and felt both hurt and displeased at her silent and sullen demeanour. Desirous to penetrate her daughter's secret thoughts, she was anxious to scan her every action, and scrutinize their motive; and with this intent she not only sedulously observed all her movements herself, but placed her favourite attendant, Kitty Hobbs, as a watchful guard, intrusted with full powers to pry secretly into the young lady's conduct.

Thus beset on every side with spies, suspicious as well as indignant of such impertinent observation, and without a friend to communicate her thoughts to, the dejected Geraldine, bemoaning in secret the absence of her affectionate Fanny, felt  
peevish,

peevish, irritated, and unhappy. Impatient of such restraint, and experiencing throughout the day a feverish agitation, she retired to enjoy the freedom of her own thoughts, at as early an hour as she could escape to her chamber.

Here the obtrusive Kitty pursued, and with ill-meant officiousness offered her services, which the indignant Geraldine rejected with angry disdain, adding, that she hoped her chamber at least would be sacred to prying curiosity and impertinent intrusion.

“When a young lady’s actions,” retorted the pert chambermaid, who was irritated at this unexpected repulse to her offered attendance, “are of a nature that cannot bear inquiry, it is no wonder she should seek retirement, to escape observation.”

The waiting-maid retired as she spoke, clapping the door after her with violence; while Miss Courteney, in high indignation, gave vent to insulted pride in a quick  
flow

flow of tears.—“And must I,” thought she, “in my father’s house, the reputed heiress of a considerable fortune, submit to the taunts of this low creature? Such treatment is not to be endured,” cried the weeping girl, bursting into a passionate soliloquy. “Sir Richard will not suffer his daughter to be insulted after this manner with impunity! I will go this instant, and demand redress from his justice. But of what avail?” she again, after a pause of mortifying reflection, exclaimed —“What redress can I hope to obtain from her favourite against the persuasions of lady Courteney, whose insinuations shall no doubt successfully oppose my just representation of the girl’s insolent conduct, when I have not here my dear generous Fanny to stand up in my support, and take my defence against my enemies?”

At the tender recollection of this faithful friend, so far away, and whose counsel and support the friendless girl now so  
much

much required, her tears streamed afresh, and she burst into renewed agonies.—“Of what mighty importance is it to my felicity,” sobbed she, “that I happen to be nobly born and an heiress? The obscure Fanny O’Grady, invited by the endearing tenderness of a mother to sooth her last agonies, is far happier in the free indulgence of these delicious feelings of nature, than I am in my high rank, and with all my vaunted possessions; for, alas! I have no fond endearing mother to claim my dutiful affection, or to meet it with responsive kindness; and with that loved and regretted parent expired for me every prospect of happiness. My fortune too,” the weeping girl thus continued to express her thoughts, “shall, as lady Courteney observes, but prove a bait for designing men to seek my hand. Could this be her real opinion, or was it only a malicious envy, delighting to disturb the happiness of others, that suggested the ungrateful observation? Too certainly it was; for if  
all

all do not conspire to flatter, and that my glass does not deceive me, I shall be sought on some other account than mere fortune. Major Blandford is uncommonly handsome, and may certainly be loved for his fine person; and that passion, which, by his personal graces, he is born to inspire, why should he not be susceptible of feeling, from the same cause, for another? Such passion, I am convinced, was the source of his assiduities to me; and I will not be guilty of so great injustice to him, as to give into lady Courteney's injurious opinion on such slight grounds. Might not this opinion be offered for the malign purpose of exercising an undue ascendancy over me, and torturing me in my feelings? If she had had no object in view but my happiness, it was at the commencement of our acquaintance she ought to have given this intimation; and that before admiration of his personal attractions could have ripened into a warmer feeling in my heart. That, however,

however, would not satisfy her invidious views—my feelings must be mocked—I must be made the sport of her caprice—the plaything of her power. But why must I submit to the unreasonable authority of my father's wife? of what use to me my grandfather's ample possessions, if I am to be deprived by this woman of the liberty of choice? and why should she deprive me of this liberty? Not for my good, that is obvious, but to indulge her own malevolent disposition, and because it contravenes my happiness."

In this manner did the exasperated Geraldine, blinded by passion, and roused to indignation, by turns weakly weep, and by turns fatuously reason, till to close the window-shutters, as she had intended, and her prudent resolution to avoid major Blandford, were equally forgotten.

A shrill whistle, the appointed signal, was the first circumstance to arouse her from her tears and these reflections. She  
started

started at the recollection of her unguarded promise, and too late remembered her determined purpose to evade its performance. What was now to be done? The light from her chamber-window had already proved the beacon to invite her lover to her presence; to now extinguish it would appear, she thought, more like coquetry than a real desire to shun the promised interview, and would tend still more to promote his further importunities; on the contrary, to redeem her promise, by descending with noble confidence to meet him, was, she imagined, the only honourable part she could now adopt; and to abridge their present interview, and forbid all future ones, was the utmost effort, of self-denial that prudence, circumstanced as she was, could exact.

By such fallacious reasoning did the feeble mind of Geraldine reconcile to herself this imprudent act, and with a kind of compromise, to which passion alone could have urged her, between what she  
weakly

weakly considered urgent necessity and prudence, she thus lost sight of filial duty, and departed from female decorum.

Not, however, with the serenity of virtue, or the calm of a quiet conscience, did she descend to give the promised meeting, but with trembling step, and palpitating heart, with conscious dread and just reluctance.

Her alarm and agitation were so apparent as to excite in major Blandford inquiry as to the cause, on which, detailing in reply her deep and poignant sense of the indiscretion of which she was guilty in these stolen interviews, and her unwillingness to continue them, the artless girl had the weakness to betray, perhaps with a view of extenuating her own fault, her indignation of lady Courteney's treatment.

This was furnishing her lover with arms, which he did not fail of address to employ against herself, to overcome all her scruples. Whatever, therefore, the  
most



most artful insinuations could suggest to inflame wounded pride, and arouse a high indignant sense of invaded right and outraged independence, were all presented in insidious train to the irritated mind of the innocent Geraldine—her haughty step-dame the primary cause—the pert waiting-woman the active agent—and she, poor hapless orphan! the unoffending object against which was to be directed every malign effort of a persecuting spirit, the innocent victim of deceitful and overbearing oppression!

Without prudence or reflection to regulate her actions, without a friend to guide them, delighted at the idea of having some person to whom she might communicate her thoughts, and urged on by passion and resentment, the innocent girl gave into the snare, and not only continued till near morning this secret conference, but had the still greater and more criminal weakness to promise to renew it on the

(VOL. I. K following

following and each succeeding night, till Fanny, whom she expected in a few days, would return.

Gratified at the idea of her superior address in deceiving lady Courteney, with all her consummate craftiness, Geraldine made this promise without remorse; and not once considering that by her indiscretion she would aid that lady's most invidious design of blackening her in the eye of her father, and supply her with just subject for severe reprehension, she only thought of the pleasure she was to enjoy in eluding her watchful vigilance, and escaping the observant eye of the odious Kitty.

Her faithful monitress, whose prudent advice would have preserved her from such indiscretion, was unfortunately far away; and the promised letter, which was to solace absence, and would reiterate her maternal instructions, arrived not on the expected day (or if arrived, was suppressed)

pressed), and our heroine, prompt in all her feelings, felt hurt and dissatisfied at this neglect.

For a week this private intercourse continued, during which major Blandford, who had procured leave of absence from his regiment, was importunate with Geraldine to commit her person and honour to his safe conduct in a trip to Scotland, where at the altar of Hymen he was impatient to devote himself for life her legal protector. The young lady (on whose too sensitive mind the artful insinuations of the major, co-operating with the proud frigidity of lady Courteney and the insolent demeanour of Kitty Hobbs, had made a deep impression) had still, notwithstanding the fatal captivation of her senses, so perfect an idea of filial duty as to start at this proposition, and resolution to oppose innumerable weighty arguments to all his importunities to this effect. One of these arguments, suggested at first in a careless manner by himself, and which

produced its designed effect on her mind, was her fear of the danger to which he might be exposed from a prosecution on her account, but which he obviated at once (with an apparent disinterestedness that gave transport to her glowing heart), by declaring his willingness to throw up his commission, exile himself from his country, and pass the interval till she became of age, when all danger would cease, in some retired spot which their mutual love should render delightful.

Of this tranquil retirement, illumed by the joys of love, and cheered by happiness, he drew so lively and fascinating a picture as to remove in part her objections.—“ I have been born,” said she, as she revolved the matter in her mind after they had separated, “ for the enjoyment of this delightful retirement, not for the vain pomp of high life, or the tasteless parade of the world. Lady Courteney’s undue severity, her ill-judged restraint and unbending reserve, will drive me to seek refuge  
in

in the arms of love; she alone shall be accountable for the impropriety of my conduct, for it is her injudicious treatment shall urge me to this inevitable step."

By such like sophistry did the erring Geraldine now seek to excuse the rash act she meditated, and which, with all the delusion of her fascinated imagination, she could not entirely justify to herself.— "I see it is my destiny to wed major Blandford." At another moment she exclaimed—"The fates have certainly decreed him for my husband, and it is in vain I would oppose this decree."

Thus did the unreflecting girl, without heeding the loud cry of conscience, or the sober voice of reason, but attending only to the illusions of the fancy, and the suggestions of the passions, create a destiny for herself, and then with deplorable fatality regard it as irreversible!

"Yet my foreboding heart," again thought she, "in a moment of awakened conscience, whispers me I shall do wrong.

which might, as she imagined, render it justifiable.

In this dubious state, neither consulting the will of her Heavenly Father in prayer, nor pursuing the dictates of her conscience, the infatuated girl, with the usual blindness of minds prepossessed, committed her decision to chance, and resolved to be governed by circumstances. Fatal irresolution, that thus procrastinates wise resolves! more fatal error (flowing from this irresolution), that thus commits to blind chance an act on which her eternal destination, as well as her happiness here, may so much depend!

In this uncertain state of mind, the usual signal caught Geraldine's watchful ear, on which, softly unclosing the chamber-door, she descended to the library. With trembling hand she turned the lock, and was about to enter, when pouncing on its victim like a bird of prey, the ferocious Kitty made her appearance.—  
“ What

**"What are you doing here at this hour of the night, Miss Courteney, when you ought to be in bed and asleep?" demanded she, fiercely.**

**Geraldine, unable to reply, trembled in every nerve, and was pale with terror.**

“On no good purpose, miss, can you be come here,” resumed the malicious girl. “My lady shall be informed of these doings.”

“ I came,” returned the affrighted Geraldine, assuming, with a considerable effort, courage to repulse this insolence, “ to get a book ; for having no disposition to sleep, I wanted something to amuse me : but——” A conscious glow of shame tinged the young lady’s before-pale cheek at this mean evasion, and turned her aside from the angry feeling she felt ready to express : “ but your sudden appearance, Kitty,” she added, in a milder tone, produced by her secret consciousness, “ so like in your pale looks a spectre from the

grave, threw me into such a fright, that I felt at a loss for words to answer."

"And am I so like a spectre," inquired Kitty, in accents somewhat more gentle than her first angry address, "that I really frightened you, Miss Courteney?"

"You are indeed pale enough to appear at this moment a fit inhabitant of the grave," replied Geraldine, in a firmer voice, on discovering the deathlike hue which spread over Kitty's countenance.

"My lady, ma'am, was suddenly taken ill, and I was dreadfully alarmed," said the waiting-woman.

"Is she now better? shall I go see her?" inquired Geraldine, subduing at this information, which accounted in part for Kitty's appearance, some portion of her first terror.

"She is a good deal recovered; and being disposed for rest, you had better not disturb her. I was just leaving her apartment, when imagining I heard a noise  
below,



below, I came to learn the cause, and alarmed you by my presence. Good night, ma'am !"

Kitty retired; and Geraldine forgetting the book that was to amuse her, retreated in eager haste to her chamber.

Having first secured, for fear of surprise, the door of the apartment, she softly threw up the sash, and motioning with her hand to major Blandford, (who since the disappearance of the light and her receding figure in the apartment above, had been stationed at the window below) intimated danger within, and entreated him to retire. He retreated no farther than the first convenient shelter which the neighbouring shrubs afforded, and where, from their friendly covert, he could still gaze on her chamber-window, supplicate her pity with uplifted hands, or with their movement invite her quick descent.

Geraldine, notwithstanding the apparent terror expressed on Kitty's pale countenance, and her account of her ladyship's  
K 6                      indisposition,

indisposition, still entertained doubts as to the real cause of her sudden appearance, and imagined it could be for no other purpose than to observe her actions. She trembled therefore lest she should now open any of the windows on that side of the castle, and discover major Blandford. In her alarm and dread of discovery, she extinguished the light; the moon, however, just risen, rendered every object without so visible, that she felt powerless to withdraw from the window; but seated there, with her eye intensely fixed on the spot occupied by her lover, observed all his motions, or with waving hand occasionally supplicated him to retire.

Twenty minutes, which to the alarmed Geraldine and anxious major appeared so many hours, passed in this way, when the latter, impatient of such close durance, again emerged from his hiding-place, and shewed himself under the window. Geraldine, with increasing terror, motioned him away, while he in a low voice besought

sought her to descend. Apprehensive he should be heard, she instantly retreated from the window, and at the door of the chamber listened to be satisfied that all was quiet within. Not a movement but her own throbbing heart—not a stir louder than her quick short breath, broke on the stillness of night, or interrupted the quiet of the castle.

While the affrighted girl, who now became sensible of the dangerous consequences of these stolen interviews, was thus listening in fearful agitation, Blandford, impatient of such long delay, gave once more, in a loud shrill whistle, the signal for meeting.

Urged by fear, and the hope of getting him to retire, she returned a second time to the window, whispered in an undertone she would descend, and entreated him to keep quiet; then undrawing the bolt, and cautiously opening the door, she cast a fearful glance on every side, when, neither hearing or perceiving aught to create alarm,

alarm, she softly descended with trembling and unsteady step the stairs, and entered the library. With head averted, and ear intent to catch the first sound of approaching steps, she unbarred the window-shutters, and the major's ready hand threw up the sash; when with obedient transports he expressed his rapture at her appearance, and declared how excessive had been his anxiety at her protracted stay: on which Geraldine informed him in what manner she had suffered interruption from the unexpected appearance of lady Courteney's woman, her consequent apprehension of their interviews being discovered, and her alarm that he would not immediately retire.

“Never, adorable Geraldine,” cried he, with passionate energy, “will I depart hence till you consent to crown my tender wishes by becoming the companion of my flight. To hesitate now would be madness, surrounded as you are by enemies, and beset with dangers; this mercenary woman,

woman, placed by your malevolent step-mother a spy on your actions, is perhaps already acquainted with our secret interviews, and waits even at this moment to surprise us."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the terror-struck Geraldine, "it may indeed be the case; retire this moment, major Blandford, and let me regain my chamber."

"What!" cried he, "is it to leave you in the power of such fiends? to consign you, without support or protection, to the contumelious scorn and malign representations of the proud pharisaical lady Courteney and this sordid creature, who will not fail to impose on the easy faith of sir Richard with tales injurious to your honour? Perhaps at this very moment they rouse him out of sleep to witness our midnight interviews, and expose to his angry eye your indiscretion."

"Oh God!" sobbed the agonized Geraldine, wounded to the very heart at this faithful picture of her imprudent conduct,  
and

and striving to withdraw her hand, "to what injurious suspicions has my indiscretion exposed me! Why, major Blandford, would you seek these midnight interviews, so invidious to my honour?"

"Because I adored you, charming Geraldine, and too fondly imagined you returned my affection. But come, the chaise is now in waiting to convey us to the land of love: as my wife, these stolen interviews can reflect no dishonour on you. Come, dear angel!"

"For Heaven's sake, major Blandford, leave me!" cried the weeping Geraldine, still struggling to disengage her hand, which he detained. "I can meet lady Courteney's scorn, but I cannot abandon my dear father."

"Then here also, beloved and persecuted angel, shall I remain to abide the rage and vengeance of your father, rather than permit you singly to encounter his fury, and their vile misrepresentations."

"Unhappy creature that I am!" sobbed  
Geraldine

Geraldine, in agony, “ what shall become of me? To what scornful taunts shall your ill-regulated affection, major Blandford, and my fatal indiscretion, expose a poor weak girl! Let me go, sir! in mercy I beseech you let me go, that I may regain my chamber while it is possible!”

“ And would you, cruel girl, fly the breast in which your lovely image reigns—the arms that would shelter you from insult and oppression, to expose yourself to the scornful taunts of your enemies, who shall triumph in your imputed dishonour, rejoice at your tears, and glory in your sorrow? One expedient alone remains to screen your name from disgrace, and preserve you from future oppression; it is in becoming my wife, and giving me a legal title to declare myself your protector. Let us therefore this very moment depart for Scotland—let the happy Blandford, my lovely Geraldine, conduct you to hymeneal joys, by which alone you  
can

can honourably escape contumely and oppression."

The weeping Geraldine, distracted between doubt and terror, knew not what to reply; but no longer struggling to disengage her passive hand, she softly murmured that she should arrange her plans on the morrow, and be prepared to depart the following night.

"Now, dear Geraldine, or never!" exclaimed Blandford, pushing up the sash, and passing through the open window, from which, alarmed at his sudden entrance, the terrified girl precipitately retreated towards the door.

Major Blandford pursued, and while with one hand he caught our trembling heroine round the waist, with the other he secured by the inside fastenings the door, to prevent intrusion at the present moment, should any one be up, or retard discovery in the morning, if he should now succeed in inducing her to fly.—"A chaise,"



chaise," he resumed, "is in waiting; let us hasten to it. If we do not avail ourselves of the present opportunity to escape, our flight afterwards shall be impossible."

"Oh! no, no; not now," replied the agitated Geraldine.

"If we separate now, adorable Miss Courteney, it shall be for ever. You will be imprisoned by lady Courteney; and I, banished your sight for ever, and the most wretched of mankind, shall have to deplore your sad captivity, and my own fatal deprivation of every happiness."

"Alas!" cried the wavering Geraldine, "how can I abandon my father! or if I stay," she despondingly added, "how meet his anger!"

"Yes; how can you indeed, dear suffering angel, meet his anger, inflamed as it shall be to madness by malicious misrepresentations, and without friend or mediator!"

"Oh!

“ Oh ! my dear Fanny,” exclaimed the still irresolute girl, “ that you were here to take my part—to decide for me ! you would suggest what I ought to do, in the painful dilemma into which my indiscretion has betrayed me. But well I know,” she added, making, as the recollection of O’Grady’s parting admonition presented itself to her mind, another effort to disengage her hand, “ that invaluable friend would never permit my acting a part so derogatory to the honour of my sex, as to abandon my dear father, and commit myself in this disgraceful flight to your protection. Leave me, major Blandford !”

“ No, never, by Heaven !” he vehemently answered, pressing still closer with his grasping arm her encircled waist : “ you are mine by the sweet ties of mutual affection ; and neither the power of your father, which I shall remain here to brave, if you do not fly with me this instant, nor the arts of your stepmother, against  
which

which I am sworn to protect you, shall from henceforth sever a pair whose hearts are united in indissoluble affection."

Geraldine, overcome in a great measure by his violence, now scarce resisted as he drew her towards the window, and returned no answer but tears.

"A moment's delay may prove fatal to our successful retreat; and thus surprised, dearest Geraldine, your tarnished fame," he artfully insinuated, "shall be, to the malicious lady Courteney, the glorious consequence of these midnight meetings: let us escape such mortifying result by instant flight. We have not a moment to lose; you see fate itself has decided for you, and urges your immediate departure; for even now, while we speak, our enemies may surprise and separate us for ever, by your imprisonment and my death, for nothing else shall tear me from you."

"Yes, there is a destiny in all things: it is that, I perceive, urges me on," cried the fair fatalist. "I must now escape the power

power of lady Courteney, or be for ever wretched !”

While Geraldine was speaking, Blandford, with his arm still encircling her waist, approached the window, when recollecting how improperly attired she was for a long journey, she again drew back, with intention to return to her chamber for her pelisse and bonnet; but the major, fearing she might relapse into her former irresolution, or perhaps unwilling to give her time to reflect, eagerly opposed such intention as hazardous to their successful flight, and unnecessary, as he had taken care to provide her with a bonnet and great-coat fit for night-travelling, and which were in the chaise that now awaited them at the extremity of the wood.

Major Blandford, having thus wrung from the timid Geraldine a half-reluctant consent to elope, sprang through the open window, and assisted her to pass; then hurried her by the shrubbery on the lawn, which they crossed in rapid pace to the wood.

wood. Here they struck at once into an obscure path that led to an opening he had made in the high fence, and which for the last week had been his nightly pass.

On the road near this spot his servant, mounted on horseback, was stationed, who, as soon as he beheld them approach, disappeared, but returned in a few minutes in full gallop, followed by a chaise and four. Blandford, whose arm supported the trembling Geraldine, lifted her, weeping and agitated, into the chaise, and then with joy in his proud heart, and exultation in his sparkling eye, took his seat beside the dejected, self-humbled, and sadly-conscious girl.

## CHAPTER XI.

Bring me a father, that so loved his child,  
 Whose joy of her is overwhelm'd like mine,  
 And bid him speak of patience.      SHAKESPEARE.

.....

Forsake, thou wretch, forsake thy bow'r of air,  
 And sit retir'd within thy own despair!  
 There call repinings, fears, and sorrows round,  
 And tear, with ceaseless hand, thine aching wound.  
 PRESTON.

HER gloomy and reserved air, her occasional agitation, and the disquietude that for the last eight days appeared to prey on Geraldine's mind, disturbed lady Courteney: Some secret anguish seemed to lie heavy on the young lady's heart, and the mother's too-sensible heart was most feelingly affected by it: some internal struggle, it was evident, had for the last day even held great conflict in her thoughts,

thoughts, and the mother's acute mind, unable to penetrate the cause, was worked up to a state of anxiety that fell little short of distraction. In this disturbed state, the pious lady retired to prayer and meditation, which, though continued beyond their usually-protracted length, had not power to quiet her apprehensions.

Though the fair votaress, since the alarm produced in her thoughts at the solemn address of the unknown voice, was less accustomed to the use of audible prayer, yet now, in the present disturbed state of her mind, she felt herself urged to pour forth her soul in loud and fervent ejaculations; when, wonderful to relate, and terrific to every alarmed sense, the same dread-inspiring voice answered—  
“Woman! sinful woman! shrive of its black secrets thy guilty heart! unfold thy blood-stained conscience—then shalt thou find rest!”

The human mind, endued with most strength from the practice of religion and

the exercise of reason, shall instinctively shudder at supernatural occurrences, and struck with solemn dread, start back at such awful warning from God, announced as by no human agent. It is no wonder then that an involuntary cry escaped lady Courteney's lips, and aghast with horror, she darted from the closet. Sir Richard, who was already in bed, alarmed at the trembling and agitation which she had no power to subdue, but which he imputed to her uneasy apprehensions for the last few days respecting Geraldine, rang the bell for Kitty. That faithful attendant in a short time appeared, and instantly procured certain cordial drops, of wondrous efficacy, for her lady, which, with the cheering presence of her husband and woman, had, after some short interval, a most happy effect in quieting her alarmed spirits. Yet, though in part restored to tranquillity, the impression of the unknown voice was still strong on her mind, and willing to persuade herself the sound was  
of



of this, and not of the other world, she expressed to sir Richard her fears that some dangerous person, on unlawful or perhaps murderous design, had gained admission into the castle, and was now secreted in the closet adjoining to hers or the chamber over, as from either she was certain having heard an odd unaccountable noise issue, not unlike the human voice.—“It is nothing more than some illusion of your fancy, disordered by such continual meditation and your low spirits, that have conjured up this notion, my dear lady,” said sir Richard.

“How could any person, my lady, gain admission to the room adjoining your closet, which is constantly locked, and of which you keep yourself the key?” inquired Kitty.

“Yet from that very room,” replied lady Courteney, “I think the noise issued. I wish, sir Richard, you would rise, and before this person could make good his

escape, examine the closet, and see what could produce this strange effect."

"Indeed, my lady, it is quite unnecessary," interposed Kitty; "for not as much as a cat, or a mouse either, could gain entrance into that room; however, to quiet your alarm, I am willing to undertake the examination—so don't disturb sir Richard."

The baronet, unwilling to be disturbed, approved of this proposal; his tender wife assented; and Kitty, with the key, repaired to make this search, while the lady, still in evident agitation, impatiently awaited her return.

In less than ten minutes the faithful attendant once more appeared; and with solemn affirmation assured her lady, that after the most careful and exact examination on her part, no living creature was in either rooms to be found, from whence could proceed the voice which her ladyship imagined she had heard.—"It must, therefore," concluded the maid, "be only  
an

an illusion of your fancy, as sir Richard observed, my lady."

Lady Courteney, thus obliged to yield credence to this positive assertion, was far from feeling happy at the idea, but rather seemed plunged in deep thought, and sunk to still heavier depression : unwilling, however, to pain the good-natured baronet by an appearance of dejection which she had not force to overcome, she expressed an inclination to sleep, and dismissed Kitty.

It was at this time, when retiring from her lady's chamber to her own, the waiting-woman heard a soft tread on the stairs, and perceived a gleam of light descending ; on which, expecting she had discovered the cause of lady Courteney's alarm, she stole softly down, and surprised Geraldine in the act of unclosing the library-door. Irritated at supposing her the person who had produced such uneasiness in her lady's mind, and given herself such consequent trouble, she addressed Miss

Courteney at first rather roughly ; but as suspicion in her mind gave way to the young lady's explanation, her tone became more gentle, and without seeking to scrutinize further the motive of her visit to the library, she retired, much wearied of attendance, where her impatient wishes had already preceded her, to her own chamber.

Lady Courteney, restless and agitated throughout the night, disturbed sir Richard, and neither rose till a late hour ; and though breakfast, in consequence, was unusually late, yet Miss Courteney was not visible. The housemaid was sent to call her from her chamber—she was not there ; when it was supposed that, invited by the fineness of the morning, she was gone to the garden or pleasure-ground, where a servant was dispatched to seek and summon her to breakfast. Meantime sir Richard and lady Courteney, expecting every moment her entrance, took their seat at the breakfast-table : the breakfast

was

was made and half over, still Geraldine appeared not, and the servant dispatched to seek her returned with word he could nowhere find his young lady.—“ Order the wood to be searched, sir Richard,” cried lady Courteney. “ My too-foreboding heart, alarmed at Geraldine’s inexplicable conduct, anticipated this evil. I am afraid she forgets what is due to the honour of her sex, in continuing to give major Blandford these meetings.”

Sir Richard, taking instant alarm at this painful suggestion, dispatched several servants in different directions, and also proceeded himself without further delay to seek his daughter. He had not been gone many minutes when one of the housemaids entered, to inform her lady that she had just discovered Miss Courteney had not been in bed in the night; that the library-door was made fast on the inside, and one of the windows (through which it was possible the young lady had effected her escape) left open. Lady

L 4

Courteney,

Courteney, on hearing this, rose instantly to reconnoitre the chamber and library; at the appearance of which, just as the girl had stated, she no longer hesitated to believe that Geraldine had eloped, and amazed at such discovery, hurried forth towards the wood, with the grievous intelligence to sir Richard.

It was a considerable time before lady Courteney could come up with the baronet; for, urged by paternal anxiety, the distracted father had already penetrated the most secret passes of the wood in pursuit of his daughter. While trembling with consternation, and breathless with her long walk, the affrighted lady was giving the wretched man, in broken sentences, this heart-wounding information, some of the servants came up to point out to their master the breach in the fence, through which it was now clear the lovers had passed, and the wheel track of the chaise still visible on the bye-road adjoining. No doubt now remained to the unhappy

happy

happy parent that his idolized child had deserted him ; and that major Blandford, as his lady had suggested, was the companion of her flight, appeared scarce less evident. In the first violent burst of passion, to which in his rage and affliction sir Richard gave way, he execrated his daughter's undutious conduct, swore he would banish her his sight and his affections forever, and think of her as his child no more ; while his gentle lady, in great affliction herself, prudently delayed, till the first violence of his fury would abate, to offer him consolation.—“ Who could have thought that she, my Geraldine,” the fond parent exclaimed, with returning tenderness, “ once so playful and so innocent, could have thus deceived her poor father ?”

“ It was cruel of her,” returned lady Courteney, “ for you loved her, my dear sir Richard, with all a parent's doting fondness, and deserved not to be thus abandoned ; but then, let us consider that there is no good on earth that is not dashed

with evil. Children, at times the cause of joy, prove also the fruitful source of much affliction; we must strive to forget them, and fix our thoughts on Heaven."

"And could I, do you think, lady Courteney, forget my Geraldine?" inquired the weeping father.

"This disappointment in your daughter was certainly decreed by Heaven, to punish your blind partiality for the girl: accept this punishment, sir Richard, from God's hand; and do you leave her to the chastisement which her imprudent choice deserves, and which major Blandford's turpitude, after having obtained his sordid aim, shall not fail to inflict."

"Oh! no, no; I cannot leave my beloved child," cried sir Richard, as he hurried back with quickened pace towards the castle; "she may not yet be quite lost to her poor deserted father. I will hasten myself on the pursuit; perhaps I may reach them in time to prevent their marriage."

"And



“And to what purpose now prevent it, sir Richard?” inquired lady Courteney. “Is not Geraldine, by her clandestine meetings with her lover, and fatal elopement, lost to woman’s honourable fame?—who would now espouse her? It is better she should become Blandford’s wife; do not therefore oppose their union.”

“What!” cried the afflicted baronet, warmly, “give up my child—my lovely child—my sweet Geraldine, to the villain who has robbed me of my treasure!”

“Be patient, my dear sir Richard,” said lady Courteney; “your child is not yet lost to you. When the lovers are married, they will no doubt seek your pardon and protection; and it will then be of your own choice to give the fugitives the reception you think proper. To pursue them now would be to no purpose but to harass your poor tottering frame, already enfeebled by the sudden and dreadful shock this shameful elopement has caused you; and to render me quite miserable in

your absence, by the dread I should have of any rencounter taking place between you and major Blandford, which, if you were to meet him in the present irritable state of your feelings, would be the case, I am certain."

"I believe you are right, lady Courteney," answered the baronet, after a pause; "for I should no doubt abuse the fellow for stealing my daughter. But then, if Geraldine should be so charmed with her new husband as to forget her father (it may be the case; for I well remember, when I married you, lady Courteney, I was so pleased with my new bride as to forget almost entirely my Geraldine, the little darling that used to fly to my arms, and whom I was accustomed to fondle on my knee), and if she should forget me now, and not seek the pardon I am so willing to give, how shall I endure her loss, or support her absence?"

"Do not be under any apprehension on that account, sir Richard," replied lady Courteney.

Courteney. "Major Blandford and his bride will soon seek your favour for her fortune, which was with him the great object of attachment."

"If I thought he ran away with my daughter for the sake of her fortune, I would never give the fellow a guinea. My Geraldine (sweet, lovely, good-natured creature that she was!) though she had the cruelty to desert her poor father, is worthy to be loved on her own account if she had not a stiver."

"The event will prove, sir Richard," said lady Courteney, with emphasis, "if it be not your own fault, by a too-precipitate reconciliation, whether *Miss Courteney*, or *Miss Courteney's fortune*, was the *object* of major Blandford's adoration. You may indeed now, if you will, meet or even prevent the wishes of the fugitives, by hastening after them; and by such a journey, perhaps, in the present irritable state of your nerves, bring on an alarming indisposition; and then, when  
you

you meet, a little blustering on yours, and a few tears on their part, shall reconcile all parties; and the *denouement*, I perceive, shall be this—the accomplishment of major Blandford's sinister project, and the exhibition of sir Richard Courteney's folly, in rewarding the villain who rendered an only daughter rebellious to the best of fathers, by the free gift of her fortune."

By such suggestions as these, while they proceeded through the wood to the castle, did lady Courteney divert sir Richard from his first purpose of pursuing his daughter, and impress on his mind the ungrateful idea that major Blandford sought her only for her fortune.

The poor ruffled baronet, warmed with his walk, and though his heart was overflowing with tenderness, still fired by passion, threw his hat into a corner of the breakfast-parlour, and himself on a chair, in moody humour, as soon as he entered.

Lady Courteney, having the double  
weight

weight to sustain of compassion at his affliction, and grief for her own loss in Geraldine, sat weeping beside her disconsolate husband.

The little Arthur, who had not seen his parents that morning, on being informed of their return, came running into the parlour, and in innocent endearment flung himself on his mother's bosom.—“Go, child,” said she, pushing him away with repulsive coldness, “I want not your caresses; you may indeed give me pleasure now by your endearments, but you may hereafter prove a very adder, that I shall have nurtured in my bosom to sting me to death.”

The cherished boy, unused to such coldness or severity, sunk weeping on the floor; and unnoticed of his hitherto fond mother, sobbed most piteously.

The good-natured baronet, though he felt with full force in his wounded heart the application of lady Courteney's speech, was moved to compassion for the weeping child,

child, and stooped to raise him in his arms.—“Why do you thus ill-naturedly repulse, because Geraldine has proved undutiful and ungrateful, my poor dear boy?” began sir Richard, in an angry tone, to his lady; but which tone of severity softened to one of tender pity, at the fond interjection with which he concluded the sentence.

“Not in anger, sir Richard, do I repulse him,” replied the lady, “but because I am resolved no child shall in future, after Geraldine, obtain the same power over my heart, lest it should be wrung again by a second disappointment.”

“Poor innocent child!” said sir Richard, encouraging by his caresses the boy, “how unjust to punish you for the offence of another! but come to my bosom, and take shelter there, since your mother will not have you. You shall supply to me the loss of Geraldine, and be my comfort.”

The affectionate little fellow, thus tenderly encouraged, revives, jumps to meet his

his father's kind embrace, and flinging his arms fondly round his neck, reposes in calm content on his breast.

At this moment, a hired postchaise (which was no sooner descried than the servants, with one accord, imagined it might bring back their young lady) appeared in the avenue, and they all, urged by curiosity, or impelled by good-nature, rushed forth to welcome her return; while sir Richard and lady Courteney, roused by the bustle this appearance produced, approached the windows. When the vehicle arrived at that point of the avenue where the road separates, and one direction leads over the Chinese bridge, and up to the hall-door, and the other winds round to the stable-yard, it stopped, and not Geraldine, as the servants expected, but Fanny O'Grady, descended. The fare was ready in her hand, which the postboy receives in his; when touching, with a scarce perceptible declination of the stiff neck, his hat, he mounted the board, whirls round

round the chaise with a career of the uplifted whip, and retraces his way back; while Fanny, taking her little parcel under her arm, and not free from alarm, or without some feeling of surprise at such an extraordinary *sortie* of the castle, advances to meet the approaching servants. In their disconsolate and disappointed looks the agitated O'Grady reads evil-boding news, which their too-babbling tongues are not tardy in recounting. But what words can convey—what pen indite the weight of poignant anguish that pressed in this dire intelligence on her sad heart—expelling hence every long-cherished hope in a deep groan, and suspending, in this untoward defeat of her dearest wishes, every faculty of life!

When Fanny O'Grady had suffered bitter disappointment in the warmest feelings of a tender heart, the generous and friendly sympathy of her compassionate lady consoled her; and fervid gratitude to that kind lady effaced at once love and indignation



indignation in her breast, and left faithful attachment triumphant. This lady, though still living in her memory, had been untimely snatched from her sight by sudden death, when every fond impulse, throbbing in her grateful and affectionate heart, all centered on her loss in the youthful objects whom the dear lady's maternal love cherished. No connubial chain, no kindred tie, intervened between Fanny's warm love and these dear objects; her mother alone, supported by her tender care and duteous affection, possessed a claim on her regard; but separated from this parent by distance, and still more by education, though the feelings of nature (which in good and virtuous hearts never lose their force) maintained in hers her mother's rights, yet Charles Plunket and Geraldine Courteney possessed the nobler and more susceptible part. To that mother (reposing now, as she had reason from her pious and simple life to hope, in a state of immortal bliss) she had the day before

before rendered the last duties of filial affection, and consigned of her all future care to the mercy of Heaven, when, filled with anxiety at not having heard from her young lady, she travelled with a speed that kept no pace with her impatient wishes all night in the mail-coach, and at morning took a chaise to finish her journey. Her bounding heart, as she descended from this chaise, felt ready to rush forth from her breast to meet the dear child of her tenderest affection, when the dire news of her elopement from her father's house assailed her ears, and her insulated heart, shut up from all joy, and without kindred heart to repose on, sunk to the friendly earth for refuge.

The servants flew instantly, with prompt and compassionate regard, to procure relief for the fainting O'Grady; and sir Richard, followed by lady Courteney, rushed out to lend their assistance. She revived but to bemoan with tears, and in the most piteous language, the young lady's

lady's flight, and to reproach sir Richard for his supineness in not pursuing.—“Are you a father,” said she, “to remain thus indifferent respecting the fate of your daughter—father to the most amiable of God's creatures, who joined to all that could be lovely and engaging in female gentleness of manners and sweetness of temper unequalled, a feeling heart and the most endearing nature—and could you, inhuman man! suffer such a child to be borne from you without exertion for her recovery—without flying in her pursuit?”

The baronet, moved to tears by Fanny's grief and distraction, sobbed like an infant at these reproaches, which, with the painful consciousness of their being so justly deserved, stabbed him to the very heart. He made a motion to approach and speak to her, when lady Courteney interposed, and taking his hand, said—“Come away, my dear sir Richard, and leave this poor distracted woman to the care of the servants,

vants, before her grief, in addition to your own, shall kill you. Her head is certainly disordered at the elopement of Geraldine, and she knows not what she is saying."

"Yes, lady Courteney, I know what I am saying, and you ought to feel it. You, a woman and a mother, and not be the first to urge sir Richard (were his own culpable negligence to detain him a single moment) on the immediate pursuit of his child! and such a child too as any father might be proud of; yet he, unnatural parent! remains indifferent to her loss, and without using effort to regain her!"

"Come, my poor dear husband," again repeated lady Courteney, as she cast on the baronet a tearful eye, and drew him away; "you wanted not this cruel language to rankle the deep wound your daughter's rebellious conduct and shameful flight have already inflicted."

Lady Courteney, while she was speaking, passed her hand under sir Richard's arm,

arm, and turned with him towards the door; and Fanny, anxious to discover some motive for her young lady's flight, and expecting perhaps to find some letter might explain her conduct, hastened to her chamber. Here, however, no letter was to be found that might account for Geraldine's sudden disappearance; but her drawers and bandboxes remained in their usual order, and, unlike the wardrobe of a person who had meditated a deliberate flight, not an article of dress or trinket was found missing. This circumstance alone gave the afflicted woman good reason to suppose the young lady's flight was not quite voluntary, and caused her to condemn still more the father's criminal neglect in not immediately following.

Relieved by this discovery from some portion of her first grief, yet still wild with the most lively apprehension of undefinable evil, Fanny hastened to the parlour, and in tremulous and hurried accents explained this circumstance to the baronet.

baronet.—“ Does this, sir Richard,” inquired the distracted woman, in a transport of agony, “ prove in your daughter any premeditated intention of eloping? Oh! no, no; she has been spirited away by some vile contrivance, and you, her father, forbear to follow!”

“ It was Geraldine’s own art, I assure you, O’Grady,” said lady Courteney. “ She was detected in carrying on a secret correspondence with major Blandford just after your departure. I found the letter myself which he had written.”

“ Detected!” repeated Fanny, with emphasis. “ *Oh that all the guilty might meet detection!* But though your ladyship found such letter, I make no doubt it might not have been dropped by Geraldine.”

“ Yes, truly; I found it on the very path where she had just been walking, and I should then have confined and treated her with the severity such conduct deserved; but mine, you know, O’Grady,  
was

was a delicate situation, and this consideration urged me, for both our sakes, to use gentleness with the young lady."

"And by gentleness," returned Fanny, "would the dear lady have been won to any sacrifice. Never, sir Richard, would your daughter have given pain by this indiscreet step to your paternal heart, if some vile machinations did not urge her to it. But why do you not pursue her? it may not yet be too late to overtake and prevent their union."

"I believe I ought," said sir Richard, in an undecisive tone, and looking at his lady.

"To what purpose, sir Richard?—to what purpose, O'Grady?" demanded lady Courteney. "Geraldine's destiny is now irreversible. Sullied in character by this imprudent step, hers can only be repaired by a union with major Blandford."

"And so reward for this vile contrivance with her person and fortune," interposed the indignant O'Grady, "the mean

designing villain who has robbed sir Richard of his daughter! Shall this be the case, sir?"

"It ought not to be," returned the baronet, approaching the bell; "I will hasten to pursue them."

"They are by this time married, and your pursuit will be of no avail," said lady Courteney, rising to prevent such intention. "Would you leave me, my dear sir Richard—and after my alarming indisposition last night, brought on by the agitation of my mind, would you leave me now, distracted with fears on your account, to pursue an ungrateful child who has deserted you?"

"And can you forget, sir Richard," cried O'Grady, approaching also, "the angel mother of that dear child, and in this perilous moment desert her daughter?"

"Your interference here is ill-timed and unnecessary, O'Grady," said lady Courteney, haughtily. "You had best retire and learn your distance."

"Had



“ Had you practised yourself that lesson, my lady, you would not now be here to reprove my interference,” retorted Fanny, indignantly. “ *You* too should *remember* the mother of Geraldine; and gratitude to the memory of that lady for her former kindness, should teach you affection and compassion for her daughter.”

“ Forbear, Fanny, this language to my wife,” interposed the baronet. “ Though highly I regard you, I cannot permit such disrespect to lady Courteney.”

“ I beg your pardon, sir Richard,” returned the ardent woman; “ but why would you, by your wilful supineness, oblige me to forget you are Geraldine’s father? However, as you seem determined to give up all inquiry after your own child, order the chaise and proper attendants, and suffer me at least to go in pursuit of her.”

To this proposition the baronet, well pleased, at once assented; and lady Courteney, desirous to be freed from the cla-

mour of a frantic woman, made no objection.—“ You had better, O’Grady,” said she, “ while the chaise is getting ready, pack up Miss Courteney’s wardrobe.”

“ I hope, lady Courteney, however your ladyship may desire it, that will not be necessary,” retorted the impetuous Fanny, flashing on her an indignant eye as she turned to quit the parlour.

“ Observe, O’Grady,” cried the mortified lady, “ if Miss Courteney is married to major Blandford, they return not here.”

“ No, no,” echoed the baronet. “ They shall not be forgiven on such easy terms: tell her that from her incensed father.”

The weeping Fanny instantly retired to prepare for this expedition, and while four of the best horses of the baronet’s stud were harnessing to the chaise, and the attendants making ready, she packed up for her lady a few necessary articles of dress, with changes of linen.

As the affectionate woman was thus employed, her heart, still partial to Geraldine,

raldine, though bleeding for Plunket's disappointed hopes, acquitted her of all deliberate intention of eloping. She knew her ardent in her feelings, and also that when any affection of the mind worked strong on these feelings, it might urge her, without consulting reason, to some inconsiderate act, of which she would the next moment repent; but she knew her of so tender and affectionate a nature as to be incapable of a deliberate deed that would give pain to any creature, much less of one that would so deeply wound the heart of her parent and friend, and possessing likewise a spirit so generous and heroic as to be ever ready to sacrifice her own inclinations to the wishes of persons so beloved. Some treacherous and insidious arts, she imagined (which her fatal absence supplied the enemies of the innocent Geraldine with an opportunity of successfully employing), must have been practised on her unsuspecting nature, to drive her to this imprudent step.

Fanny did not, however, despair, if she should be so far fortunate as to come up with the fugitives before they were married, but that she should, by the ascendancy which her affection gave her over the heart of the young lady, bring her back to a sense of filial duty and to the arms of her father. That father's pusillanimous desertion of his child, his culpable and weak submission to the opinion of his wife, where the honour and happiness of his daughter were concerned, she could not help regarding with contempt and abhorrence: she felt therefore, when he met her in the hall as she was passing out, and that he presented her a pocketbook with bank-notes, inclined to reject with indignation his offer, till recollecting her inability to continue, without this aid, such pursuit, she received it, replying tartly in return—"Your own presence, sir Richard, might prove of more efficacy, and would at least more fully mark in you the affection and obligation of a parent, than

than half the revenues of your estates disposed of in this manner, while you are yourself meanly shrinking from your duty."

"Excuse me for the present, dear Fanny," returned sir Richard, whose consciousness of not exerting himself as he ought with regard to the recovery of his daughter, made him overlook the freedom of this address, which he might not be so willing to pardon on another occasion. "It is necessary I should reconcile lady Courteney to my absence; when I have done so, I shall lose no time in joining you in the pursuit. You know the direction you shall take," he continued, as he followed her to the door of the chaise; "if circumstances should occur to make you quit this direction, dispatch an express to meet me with such intimation."

Fanny replied, as she stepped into the chaise, that she should be punctual in observing his orders; but with her usual warm candour, the blunt woman could not forbear adding, *that it was her poig-*

*nant regret the failure of personal attendance in himself rendered such orders necessary.*

Sir Richard had already directed the route they were to take, and dispatched a servant in advance to procure relays at the different post-towns, and gain of the fugitives information. Thus, with nothing to retard her pursuit, and every desire winged with an impatience to which no speed could keep pace, the anxious Fanny O'Grady departed on her journey, breathing, in each sigh to Geraldine's imprudence and Plunket's frustrated hopes, a fervent prayer for the successful issue of her own expedition.

At the first town through which they passed, no intelligence could be obtained of the runaways, and O'Grady was thrown into unlooked-for embarrassment at this untoward circumstance: unwilling, however, to lose time in seeking a new course, she continued the pursuit, after changing horses, in the same direction, with renewed

ed vigour, and towards night was recompensed for her diligence and perseverance by some certain intelligence of the flying lovers.

Inspired with renovated hope at this intelligence, fearless of danger, and insensible on such an occasion of all fatigue, the intrepid woman determined to travel through the night; and in this resolution again set off, expecting to come up with the fugitives before they could gain a port at which they might take shipping for Scotland.

## CHAPTER XII.



O'er the temperate current of his blood-  
The gentlest passions brush their breezy wings,  
To animate, but not disturb the stream. JEPSON.

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Oh, tyrant love, hast thou possessed  
The prudent, learn'd, and virtuous breast?  
Wisdom and wit in vain reclaim,  
And arts but soften us to feel the flame.  
Love, soft intruder, enters here,  
But entering learns to be sincere. POPE.

CHARLES Plunket, trained in his infant years by both his parents to think deeply, to revolve his thoughts, to reason and reflect, was possessed of intelligence at an age when other children scarce discover they have reasoning faculties. Nursed in camps, the fearless boy had been early inured to spectacles of death, and by his father's example was taught to support pain



pain without complaint, and to despise danger; while his mother's constant lessons instructed him to expect a world beyond the grave, where, in new life, he should enjoy immortality. Though the loss of both parents at so early an age deprived him of their further instruction, it did not efface from his tender mind their past lessons, which gathered strength at their death, and made a deeper impression, because conveying their final precepts.

In the tenderness of lady Courteney Charles found a second mother; and in the wise and learned preceptor which her maternal care supplied, he felt not the want of a father's instruction. The latter improved to perfect maturity the early lessons he had already imbibed, of which the result was correctness of judgment, with strength of reason; the former, by inspiring him with gratitude and filial affection, taught him the extent of his sensibility, but which, lying deep in his heart,

and under proper control, was never called forth on trivial occasions. Inured even while an infant to the practice of self-denial, and early habituated to restrain of the passions all violent excess, he possessed a mild temper and forbearing spirit; yet of the most frank, candid, and ingenuous nature, scorning deceit, he never prevaricated the truth; and above all disguise, if once warmed to indignation, expressed his thoughts freely, without being overawed by persons, or intimidated by consequences.

Charles's perfect sense of lady Courteney's maternal tenderness, and his grateful adoration for her kind indulgence to his tender years, inspired him with more than fraternal affection for the infant Geraldine, beside whose cradle every moment of relaxation from study was employed. He assisted her first efforts to walk, and taught her infant tongue to lisp the name of mother, while she in return improved him by frequent lessons in the practice of self-

self-denial; for, beautiful as a little angel, she was beloved by every body, and conscious of her power, she exercised it with tyranny, and over no one so much as Charles, who was constantly compelled to sacrifice whatever he most valued to her capricious humours, though this sacrifice, which might perhaps cost him some pain to make, would scarce please her for a second moment. Petulant too, as favourites generally are, the little maid put his patience to frequent and severe trials, in order to restore her gaiety when put to flight, or keep her in continual good humour; these trials had, however, the happy effect of rendering his own temper placid, and aiding the power he maintained over his passions by constant rule.

Such self-control gave Charles at length an ascendancy over the capricious Geraldine, as she grew in years, to receive instructions, which neither her mother, from her unwillingness to chide, nor Fanny O'Grady, from her impetuosity, could obtain,

tain, and which constituted him her first preceptor; for from him only could she be induced to receive with docility her early lessons, and from his example alone was she taught gentleness of demeanour, and mildness of temper.

As our youthful Mentor thus expanded in its first dawn Geraldine's early mind, she improved his sensibility, and by infant beauty, and infant endearment, taught him a love more tender than gratitude for lady Courteney's maternal care, or affection for Fanny O'Grady's kindness, could inspire—a love surpassing fraternal affection, and that combined, with the tender feelings of a brother, admiration of her infantine loveliness, and pity for her weak and helpless state, of which our youthful hero delighted to avow himself the protector.

This sensibility of Charles Plunket suffered a deep and severe wound at the death of lady Courteney, whom he regarded, for her tenderness to him, with all  
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the affection of a duteous son, and revered for her virtues, as he would his tutelary saint. But when the earth had scarce two months covered her remains, and before his tears were dried up for her loss, to behold her place occupied by Miss Freelove, a woman whom, for her groveling sycophancy and mean envy of Fanny O'Grady, he utterly despised, was galling to his lacerated feelings, and torture to his wounded heart.

In the first burst of anguish which the news of this astounding change conveyed, the indignant boy expressed his rising feelings, in a manner and language that rankled deep in the heart of the incensed lady, and produced there rooted enmity to the offender, whom, notwithstanding her extraordinary piety and evangelical charity, she could never be induced cordially to forgive. Early discovering that her utmost art had not been able to conceal from Charles's too-keen penetration.

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the meanness and low envy of her sordid nature (of which he sometimes in a sportive humour took ludicrous note), she already disliked him, for an acuteness of genius, whose too-severe scrutiny she had not power to withstand. It is no wonder then that this long-cherished dislike should, in such a constructed mind, amount to absolute detestation, when the ingenuous youth expressed so freely and undisguisedly his abhorrence at sir Richard's precipitate marriage, and manifested so openly the little regard he seemed willing to pay the new bride.

This hatred, inflexible in its malign purpose, and persevering in operation, impelled her, with assiduous application, and most insidious aim, to attempt estranging sir Richard's affection from Plunket. He loved the boy, however; and though the malevolent tale, frequently repeated to his disadvantage, occasionally sunk deep in the baronet's heart, yet the impression

pression was again easily erased; and for the first year of this inauspicious marriage it produced no immediate bad effect.

At this period lady Courteney presented her husband with a son, which, from the time of his first marriage, had been the most anxiously-desired object of the good knight's wishes, and was now to him the cause of much joyful gratulation. The birth of this child gave the lady additional claims on the heart of the happy father, and augmented her influence, which influence became quite absolute, when, in less than three months more, she announced a second pregnancy, and opposed the just claims of this quick-increasing progeny to the injudicious expence of maintaining such an establishment for Charles Plunket, whose tutor might now be dismissed, and the lad himself provided for by a commission in the army.

The baronet, whom excessive fondness for his wife rendered open to conviction, saw the utility of this prudent plan of her.

wise

wise suggestion. The tutor was therefore dismissed, and Charles, instead of being permitted to complete his college studies, which he had commenced two years before, was, through the interest of his patron, provided with a cornetcy in a cavalry regiment. Delighting in study, and enraptured with sciences, the youth would have preferred his academical pursuits to the pursuit of glory; but when, after intimating his preference of a learned profession, and that sir Richard negatived this intimation, not feeling himself at liberty to give further opposition to the will of his benefactor, he submitted with cheerful acquiescence, and tried, in obedience to his mandate, to suppress every tender regret it was natural he should feel at being separated from the dear playmate of his youth, his excellent tutor, and the kind Fanny.

With ample means for his complete equipment, and a promise of an annual sum that would enable him to support  
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the style of a gentleman, and live as such with the officers of his regiment till he could obtain promotion, Charles Plunket left Dermont Castle in his twentieth year, to commence his military operations. The regiment was ordered out to Spain a few weeks after he had joined it, where, during a campaign of more than five years, our young military hero distinguished himself by his valour, a consummate prudence, scarce to be expected at his years, and a fearless intrepidity.

Here, during this period, Plunket felt himself, and displayed to others, the advantages of the liberal education he had received, and in which military men are frequently so deficient; since it often happens, that for the *'scape-grace*, of whom no good can be obtained, the disappointed father, as his *dernier ressort*, shall purchase a commission, and send the booby out, because not fit for any purpose at home, to support the honour of his country.

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Our hero's education, on the contrary, was such as enabled him, by his profound skill in mathematics, to catch with facility the different evolutions to which he was now trained, to draw up the plan of a fortification, or direct the movements of a siege. By his learned research into ancient and modern history, he saw himself able to derive information from the advantages gained, or the defeats suffered, by others; by his perfect acquaintance with the geography of the country which was the scene of military operations, guide the progress of a march; and by his knowledge of drawing, sketch the position of the enemy. By these useful, but rare acquirements, and that signal quality of a great mind, which should never be found wanting in the military man that desires to signalize himself, that is, *a cool determined courage*, not the enthusiasm of the moment, shooting by intervals from a too-warm head, but a regular current, giving force to the nerves, and flowing from  
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from a firm heart, which constitutional spirit becomes perfect courage, when an intrepid soul unites to it calmness and recollection in the hour of danger, with disregard of death.

This courage, and these acquirements, in the course of the first few years of his military services, recommended our young hero to the notice of a brave field-officer, by whom he was employed in several hazardous enterprises, which, having executed with promptitude and intrepidity, gained him also, through the favourable representation of this officer, the approbation of the commander-in-chief. His promotion followed, till, by regular gradation, he gained the rank of first lieutenant, when a wound in the breast, which opened afresh after a forced march, brought on a fever, that was followed by such severe and lingering indisposition, as obliged him to obtain leave of absence for his recovery.

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When Charles returned to Dermont Castle, where he met a friendly reception from sir Richard, and was welcomed by that gentleman's fair daughter with delight and affection, how much was he surprised to discover in the little girl, full of merry pranks, that used to interrupt his studies, and gambol round him, a woman, not only grown to perfect beauty, but modelled to complete symmetry, and matured to finished grace! The Spanish ladies, by whom, without seeking their favour, he had been particularly distinguished, appeared, even with all the attraction of black eyes, white teeth, and lively expression of countenance, quite homely in comparison to his beautiful countrywoman, in the delicate fairness of whose snowy skin, and in whose vermillion bloom, he discovered more real beauty than in any brunette, however lovely.

Charmed at finding such unexpected improvement in his kinswoman, he gazed,  
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in innocent and unapprehensive delight, on the bewitching graces of her fair face and matchless form, till, while his health improved, his heart was gone; for, unconscious at first of the power of her charms, he had not been guarded against such fascination, and only became aware of the danger to which he exposed himself, when he felt its full force, and that, hopeless of success, the conviction rendered him despairing and unhappy. Yet he was not so blinded by love, but that he could perceive the culture of her mind had not kept pace with the improvement of her person; that her memory had been injudiciously loaded with trifles, while the cultivation of her reason was neglected; that, without solid principles to guide her course by, or fixed notions of what was right, she was infected with a strange doctrine of predestination, destructive of freewill, which taught her that, without effort on her own part, she was born to be saved; and that, without humiliation  
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of the spirit, which is the only basis of all true religion, she was the mere slave of externals.

Anxious to correct such errors, and willing that Geraldine's defect of mental cultivation should weigh against her personal charms, Plunket applied himself, during his stay at the castle, to the more liberal expansion of her mind, and to the eradicating from it these absurdities; but though the young lady's understanding was really defective, yet the mildness with which she bore reproof, and her docility to instruction, gave such certain indications of sweetness of temper and goodness of heart, as not only strengthened, but excused the passion her beauty had inspired. These instructions, however, (which, to disguise the too-warm feelings of his heart, he delivered with coldness and asperity) though received with the greatest good humour, were not always acceptable; the gallant and complimentary address, so peculiar to those who wear a  
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red coat, would have flowed, as she thought, with more grace from the lips of a gay young officer, whose handsome person, which combined with manly beauty dignity of demeanour and elegance of manners, would have proved quite irresistible, had he known the happy art to flatter. Yet from his complete ignorance of this art, and from the air of restraint which suppressed feelings threw over his manners, he was far from appearing to Geraldine as agreeable as Fanny O'Grady could have wished; nor did he on his part feel, as O'Grady thought, the ardour which such beauty as Miss Courteney's should inspire.

This proved no small disappointment to the sanguine hopes of that good woman, who expected, as soon as these young people would meet, that they should mutually fall in love, and by a reciprocal passion bring about the accomplishment of the deceased lady's favourite wishes; which, out of respect to the memory of

that beloved lady, and from affection to the parties, became the constant object of her thoughts, and their union the project which she daily meditated.

Aware of the situation of his heart, and unwilling to encourage a passion he thought it madness to indulge, Plunket, after a visit of little more than six weeks, meditated a timely retreat from the castle; yet though prudence combated this passion, and that gratitude to sir Richard for his generous protection and his own pure sense of honour opposed his longer stay, charmed as it were by the fascination of some powerful spell, he felt it difficult to abandon a place where his peace of mind might finally be wrecked; and it was only after many violent struggles, and by a strong effort of reason, he came at length to the decisive resolution to tear himself away.

When, however, he proposed departing, sir Richard, with good-natured warmth, opposed this intention, and insisted he should



should remain at the castle till his leave of absence would expire; and when, in excuse for not complying with this invitation, he pleaded the necessity of his going to Dublin for medical advice, the baronet sent for an eminent surgeon to the next town, to whose care he confided him, with innumerable friendly charges of his having particular attention to our young hero's health.

Thus constrained, against his better reason, to prolong his stay at the castle, Plunket now found himself engaged in as severe conflicts as any he had hitherto on the field of battle to sustain, and to his feelings more painful. These mental conflicts tended nothing to the improvement of his health, but they afforded doctor Acerbus, by the frequent agitating changes they produced, much prudent speculation: however, as reason continued to maintain such ascendance over his senses, as not to yield place for a moment to passion, the cause of his inquietude was lodged deep

in his heart, and remained impervious to every eye; and his struggles, though severe, were not perceptible.

A considerable protuberance still remained where Plunket's wound had broken open afresh, and to which, by the advice of the surgeon, was applied a gentle fomentation.

“ If my dear lady, and your best friend, Mr. Charles, had lived,” said Fanny O’Grady, who, tenderly anxious to spare him all unnecessary pain, would not suffer any other person than herself to perform this fomentation, “ you would not have got this ugly wound here, for she never would have given her consent to your accepting a commission: far different were the views this generous lady entertained respecting your establishment.”

“ And sacred to me, Fanny, should be the remembrance of all her views; for even beyond the grave, the dear lady maintains over my heart her former power. But you know sir Richard wished me to  
accept

accept the commission his interest had procured; and had my benefactress lived, it would have been her will that I should not oppose his wishes."

"You should not oppose them: besides, sir, a soldier's career, if filled, as I hope yours will be with glory, is an honourable course: it was your noble father's—learn to follow his example."

"It is the study of my life to do so, dear Fanny."

"And then, after a few years thus passed in honourable arms," resumed O'Grady, "I hope sir Richard will fulfil my lady's wishes, and hold sacred his own promise to the dying angel, by uniting you to Geraldine."

Not more rapid than a stroke of electricity did this information pass, with the quick circling current, along Charles's tremulous veins to his high-beating heart, which felt ready to escape through his parted lips, as the enraptured youth, grasping O'Grady's hand, exclaimed—"Unite

*me to Geraldine!* Can such felicity be reserved for me? Could such, dear Fanny, have been my beloved mother's wishes? Ah! I cannot doubt it; for was she not to me the very best, the tenderest, the most affectionate of parents!"

Rays of brightening hope, issuing from his softened heart, sparkled in Plunket's fine eyes, but dissolved to tears, and fell on O'Grady's hand (which was bathing his breast) at the last fond interjection — "But why did pitying Heaven," he continued, "that lent so benignant an angel for the protection of my tender years, so soon recall her to the realms of bliss, and deprive me of her loved presence?"

The new-born hope, like a tender infant unable to endure the first rude blast of life, was crushed in his heart by this idea, and expired at the birth.—"At her death, dear Fanny," he repeated, in a despondent tone, "my best hopes perished: times are strangely altered since, and I dare not indulge the tender wishes your information

information might inspire. Sir Richard Courteney will never give his daughter, the heiress of the Plunket fortune, to a poor officer, who has nothing but what he enjoys from his bounty."

"I can scarce think sir Richard (though I know lady Courteney exerts every effort for that purpose) will violate his word given to my dying lady," returned Fanny.

"Unexampled goodness!" exclaimed Plunket, while the softened feeling which throbbled in his deeply-affected soul glistened through his eyes at the tender recollection of the beloved and regretted lady, "even in the awful moment of expiring nature, I shared with her only child her maternal affection, and drew her thoughts from heaven---and these thoughts were all directed to make good my felicity!"

"She had no wish on earth but to see you both united."

"Fanny! you know not the tremulous emotions you have given birth to in my bosom,

bosom, turning, by your information, every thought to rapture, and lending fresh support to a passion, which since my return here has but too powerfully combated reason in my weak mind. But these air-built visions of cheating fancy must not delude my charmed senses, nor tempt me to swerve from rectitude and honour. Geraldine Courteney, surpassing lovely in form, endearing by the excellency of her natural disposition, and rich in the endowments of birth and fortune, is a match for the first nobleman of the kingdom; and shall Charles Plunket, my good Fanny, with no patrimony but an honourable name and his sword, dare aspire to such merit? Honour, and the fear of tarnishing, by the imputation of sinister views, that hitherto spotless name, forbid it, and shall oppose an insuperable barrier to the tender wishes that, in my own favour, might militate against Geraldine's elevation."

"But if Geraldine's tender wishes should  
meet

meet yours," said Fanny, "and that, void of ambition, she should prefer you to a titled lover, with more wealth and——"

"I dare not hope it," interrupted Charles, "nay I do not even wish it, till by merit in my military career I shall obtain rank, and render myself worthy of such felicity. Deriving education, and whatever other advantages I enjoy, from the bounty of sir Richard Courteney, shall I, while he, in unsuspecting confidence, admits me, with all the familiarity of a brother, to the society of his daughter, strive to steal insidiously into that daughter's heart, and establish there an empire that might oppose her filial duty? No, my dear Fanny! whatever weakness passion may urge me to, the rectitude of my principles shall, I trust, preserve me from such ingratitude and sinister meanness; and though it may indeed be my hard lot to feel of love only the bitterness of disappointment, yet, so long as I confine it to my own breast, the arrow that pierces my  
my

my heart shall not be barbed with remorse, nor the wound rankled by self-reproaches."

O'Grady, delighted at such heroic sentiments, declared with warmth her approbation of his present forbearance, but expressed at the same time her hopes that sir Richard would honourably redeem his word pledged to his dying wife, and that she should herself behold the full accomplishment of her dear lady's favourite wishes; when Plunket, fearing, in his over-refined sense of honour, to incur the reproach of selfish views, charged her to drop no intimation of this promise, but wait till sir Richard himself, deeming him worthy such a prize, should signify his intentions in his favour.

Plunket, unable to allay rising hope, or subdue busy thought to tranquillity, revolved again and again, in the silence of the night, Fanny O'Grady's information, till, in a delirium of joyous expectation, every raptured sense was intoxicated; but with the morning dawn, whose brightening

ing



ing rays dispel the shadows of night, these lucid visions of ideal happiness floated from his fancy, and his reason, unclouded as the noonday sun, taught him to see the futility of indulging hopes so chimerical.

Though the information thus gained from Fanny, of the obligation imposed by his beloved patroness on sir Richard in his favour, insinuated, in despite of reason, a trembling hope in his heart, yet it caused him to abate nothing of the severe restraint he maintained over his feelings, but rather imposed on his prudence and integrity, when he beheld Geraldine the following day, so captivating in youthful loveliness, the necessity of greater self-control.

END OF VOL. I.

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# THE FATALISTS.



A NOVEL.

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THE  
**FATALISTS ;**  
OR,  
RECORDS OF 1814 AND 1815.

A Novel.

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IN FIVE VOLUMES

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BY  
**MRS. KELLY,**  
AUTHOR OF THE MATRON OF ERIN, &c.

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This is the excellent soporific of the world, that when we are sick in fortune,  
(often the surfeit of our own behaviour), we make guilty of our disasters,  
the sun, the moon, and the stars ; as if we were villains by necessity—fools  
by heavenly compulsion—knaves, thieves, and traitors, by spherical pre-  
dominance—drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience  
of planetary influence.

SHAKESPEARE.

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VOL. II.

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LONDON:

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1821.



# THE FATALISTS.

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## CHAPTER I.

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That it should come to this !—

But two months dead !

SHAKESPEARE.

.....

A beast that wants discourse of reason

Would have mourned longer.

*Ibid.*

.....

'Tis now the very witching time of night,

When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out

Contagion to the world. Now could I drink hot blood,

And do such business as the bitter day

Would quake to look on.

*Ibid.*

**T**HE few female visitants that appeared at the castle, with lady Courteney's love of prayer and meditation, gave Plunket

frequent opportunities of passing great part of the evenings alone with Geraldine, while sir Richard entertained his guests at table. These precious moments were occasionally given to literary discussions, or sage precepts of wisdom ; but in which our Mentor, more disposed for admiration than instruction—for encomium than reproof, had to sustain a restrained part. Whenever this part, as it frequently happened, became too difficult to support, and that our hero's overcharged heart felt ready to escape his lips, he would fly from the tender confession his feelings were urging him to pour forth, to some solitary walk, of which little Arthur would be the sole companion ; or, to disguise his softened thoughts, have recourse to music, in which Geraldine (who possessed a fine ear, and whose voice combined softness and melody) was a great proficient.

Thus forced to maintain a continual conflict between love and honour, Plunket felt his burning heart exhausted with the  
painful



painful struggle, under whose incessant exertions his wasting form was sinking to decay. This conviction aroused at length the dormant energy of his firm nature, and forcibly impressed on his mind the necessity of a speedy departure, which (though to separate from Geraldine appeared more agonizing than death) he resolved no longer to defer. Aware, however, of the opposition which sir Richard, with cruel, though good-natured kindness, would give to his immediate departure, and conscious of his own failure of resolution to resist, the friendly baronet's entreaties for his longer stay, he arose early, after a night passed in restless agitation, and before breakfast set off for the neighbouring town, in order to suggest to doctor Acerbus the necessity of change of air for his perfect recovery, whose opinion to that effect, strengthening his own, would remove, he imagined, every obstacle his friends at the castle might oppose to his going away.

Doctor Acerbus (whom Charles found at home, and with whom he remained to breakfast) perceiving, in his departure from the castle, only the loss of a profitable patient, not the advantage to that patient of change of air, replied, with more than his usual blunt roughness and asperity—"Yes, go, if you will, sir; but take your coffin and shroud with you; for I tell you, you may drop dead on your journey, in the street, or at a ball: such change, when you least expect it, may occur."

"I am rather inclined to hope, doctor," replied Plunket, with a smile, "my case is not quite so desperate, and that change of air will effect my complete recovery."

"Your native air, sir, would be more conducive to the perfect re-establishment of your health than any other," returned the doctor; "I cannot therefore see any present necessity you have for change of air—unless it is, sir," he added, dryly, after a short pause, "that the atmosphere of  
Dermont

Dermont Castle may not be as favourable to you now as formerly; in which case you don't perhaps feel there so much to your satisfaction, and might imagine that to remove to another scene would contribute to the ease of your mind. Is that it, sir?"

"Oh yes, sir," answered the ingenuous Charles, whose words were in constant unison with his thoughts, and who forgot in this moment the necessity of concealment—"it would ease my mind no doubt, and take a load from my heart scarce supportable."

"Things indeed are strangely altered there," observed the doctor, "since the death of the first lady Courteney, who was your near kinswoman and best friend, and with no one so much as you, lieutenant Plunket."

"She was indeed my best and truest friend," exclaimed Plunket, with enthusiastic ardour, "and she was the friend of human kind. Endowed with every an-

gelic virtue that could exalt human nature to the Divinity, without affectation of extraordinary piety or parade of religion, that excellent lady was continually offering to God a pure homage, in the benefits that, for his sake, she rendered to his helpless and suffering creatures. No one, sir, more fully experienced these benefits than I did; nor could any person more sensibly feel her loss—to me severe loss indeed—the loss of happiness.”

Charles spoke without reflection, from the fulness of his heart, and a profound sigh closed the sentence, to which doctor Acerbus answered—“I am concerned to learn affairs are so altered to your disadvantage at the castle, lieutenant Plunket; I thought sir Richard a good-natured man, and that he would never forget you.”

“Neither has he,” replied Plunket, with quickness, blushing crimson deep at the inference drawn from his last sentence, and in which he instantly perceived his feelings had unconsciously betrayed him.  
into

into an ambiguity of expression that might certainly admit such conclusion ; “ to me sir Richard Courteney has always proved, in the fullest acceptation of the term, the most tender parent ; providing for my establishment in life with a solicitude equal to the attention he has paid my education, his paternal care stops not here, but discovers, as you yourself have witnessed, an anxiety for the perfect re-establishment of my health truly affectionate.”

“ All who have the honour of sir Richard Courteney’s acquaintance,” rejoined the doctor, “ know him to be possessed of such sterling good-nature as would render him incapable of acting in a cruel or unkind manner by any one ; but as bile, which is necessary to promote the secretions of the stomach, becomes prejudicial to the constitution when it overflows, so good-nature (my analogy shall hold good, though this be sweet and the other bitter) in the disposition where it abounds, and though intended for its greater perfection,

shall degenerate to weakness, and may produce, by the abuse, an unkindness it never meant."

" Sir Richard Courteney, doctor, would be incapable of unkindness to the meanest and most worthless creature on his estate; how far then from his disposition to act unkindly by me, whom, from very childhood, he fostered and protected, and for whom he has now so honourably provided !"

" As an honourable gentleman, he was bound, without doubt, to provide for the child whom he reared as his own son; so that I can't see, after all, any great matter he has done for you. Had the first lady Courteney lived, you would have been differently established; but the present woman, a bitter pill and damned hard of digestion, is as politic as a prime minister of state, and a cursed shrew; she will look to her own interest."

" I have ample cause for grateful acknowledgment to the whole family—none  
at

at all for complaint, sir," said Plunket. "To the bounty of sir Richard I am indebted for every thing; I now enjoy, through his interest, honourable independence, and possess the means of raising myself in a noble profession; should I not succeed, to misfortune or my own imprudence must I attribute the failure—to no defect of attention on his part."

"Yet if this same lady Courteney ruled not the helm, you would never, young man," said the doctor, in his blunt way, "have been put off with a cornetcy, that's certain. That marriage was confounded unlucky for you, and to be sure proved, in the poor baronet himself, the most ridiculous folly: it was just acting like a hypochondriac that would take too much acid to correct what he thought bile, but which was nothing more than a repletion of the stomach, from too excessive indulgence of a pampered appetite. The wife, like the acid, shall turn sour what his palate most relishes, and prey on his vitals.

when he least expects what he took for medicine should produce such baleful effect."

"In love affairs, you know, doctor," said Plunket, with a smile, "the wisest men may sometimes commit such follies."

"A sharp lancet to let plenty of blood, and free bowel discharge to such folly, to cool it!" returned the rough doctor.— "What a sweet armful of unsound flesh, puffed up with a proud spirit, the man had to be in love with! That indeed was love with a blister, and to which, when it rises, the wife's tongue shall by turns apply salve or caustic. It would have been something if the woman possessed youth or beauty to excuse such folly; but, to tell you the truth, lieutenant, the whole country supposed sir Richard was making good his claim for a strait waistcoat, when he raised Sally Freelove, old and forgotten of the world, to the dignity of lady Courteney."

"It was a match certainly that reflected

no



no credit on sir Richard's understanding, and might in some measure, by its indecent haste, be deemed disrespectful to the memory of the amiable lady whom Miss Free love in so short a space of time replaced," returned Plunket, betrayed unguardedly into confidence by the whimsical allusions of the doctor: "but you know, sir, in a connubial choice, every man should be permitted to please himself; and, under the dominion of the *sovereign passion*, there is no accounting for the folly we may commit."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the doctor, contemptuously, "nothing short of insanity could excuse such folly."

"It may have been folly perhaps in our friend, sir," answered Plunket—"and who so liable to such folly as a person of a disposition flowing with kindness, and unsuspecting of evil, like his? But what then? an active life of benevolence, such as sir Richard Courteney pursues, is able to redeem a hundred such foolish acts."

Plunket arose, and not waiting for doctor Acerbus to reply, wished him good-morning.

The principal officers of the garrison here were all of lieutenant Plunket's acquaintance; he could not therefore leave town without rendering them a visit; and when he called, pleased with his society, they all became equally importunate with him to pass the morning in their company, and remain to dine at the mess. Willing to elude the too-dangerous charm of Geraldine's presence, now become doubly fascinating (when firmness to resist was most necessary), at the painful idea of so soon separating, he consented to dine with these officers; but as the public execution of a malefactor was to take place that day in the town, desirous to fly the sight or hearing of so dreadful a spectacle, he rode back to the castle, to announce to sir Richard his intention of departing hence the following morning, and to give orders to his servant to prepare for his intended journey.

Geraldine,

Geraldine, fortunately for his internal peace, was absent paying a morning visit with lady Courteney, and Charles, anxious to make good his retreat before she should return, cut short sir Richard's friendly arguments in favour of his longer sojourn at the castle, by quitting him abruptly. The baronet, who really loved our hero, unable to account for his so eager wish of leaving them (for better air than at Dermont Castle he could not be persuaded he would find elsewhere), was both hurt and offended at his abrupt departure, and the opposition which he gave to his pressing entreaties to prolong his stay.

Meantime doctor Acerbus (who, notwithstanding a love of gain and certain asperities of nature, was of so philanthropic a disposition as to be desirous, from the horrific contemplation of even death itself, to gain such information as might add lengthened life to others) had an eye on the malefactor. Though the crime for which the unhappy man suffered was not  
such

such as would give the College of Surgeons legal claim to his body, yet, on account of the late failure of subjects from the receptacles of the dead (in consequence of the increased vigilance of surviving friends or relatives to prevent the graves being purloined of their inmates), our surgeon, considering this criminal fair game, and a most desirable acquisition, was anxious to bargain with some of the soldiers on guard for the reversion of his body. His usual agents (who, according to the technical terms, were wont to procure him a *corncreak* \* for half-a-guinea, and a *hog* † for a guinea) not being able to assist him in this case, obliged him to have recourse to one of the soldiers, with whom, after much higgling, and by the aid of an additional crown to drink with the customary guinea, he made a compact for the body.

This successful negociation produced in doctor Acerbus, whose teeth watered at the idea of the work as he whetted his dissecting-

\* A child.

† An adult.

dissecting-knife, a most delightful exhilaration of spirits for the rest of the day, and which he manifested in many extravagant jokes in his usual rough way, to the no small entertainment of the officers, who, accompanied by our hero, encountered him in the streets, as they strolled about for their amusement before dinner.

From the street the military party, summoned by the warlike call of brazen trumpets, hastened to the mess-room, in as joyous spirits (to the exception of Plunket, who felt unusually depressed) as ever they rushed in a charge on the enemy; where they dispatched full dishes and overflowing bumpers with as much celerity and vigour as they would break the French line; and where again, too, each fought over their battles, boasted of the achievements they had dared, or the conquests they had won; or, just as wine softened the heart or exhilarated the spirits, toasted the charms of their mistress,  
sung

sung of the glory of victory, or the delights of love.

Thus cheerily employed, time passed as rapidly on with these gay officers as it could possibly have done were they occupied with any military duty; and though the night wore fast away, they thought not of separating; even Plunket, enemy as he truly was to all excess, charmed by their gay merriment into oblivion of his own depressing thoughts, and willing to avoid Geraldine, had not a wish of retiring. It was at that hour when, according to nursery legends, yawning graves are supposed to give up their dead, and spectres to stalk about on solemn or dread errands—when, amid the lofty ruin of former magnificence, the dull owl screams the night-watch, or in the lowly cottage the cock crows from the roost, and by an unequal number of crows, appals with dread of some impending evil the alarmed housewife—when, with the pious vision-  
ary

ary or the contemplative student, the wasting taper casts a blue flame, spreading gloom around, and producing melancholy—or while, at the joyous revel, the oft-snuffed candles burn briskly, diffusing mirth as well as radiance—a spectre, of hideous appearance (if, in conformity to the doctrine of metaphysics, matter can constitute spirit), and of no inconsiderable dimension either, entered the mess-room, to demand of the officers justice and retribution.

. This spectre was not, as spectres are generally described to be, of a tall, thin, awful form, gliding with noiseless and imperceptible step into the room, and his long black drapery, drawn round him in negligent folds, gracefully trailing the floor—no; his figure was short, and appeared more inclined to swell into unseemly bulk than ascend to graceful height—a substantial proof that it was not *spiritual food* which produced such ample dimension. Pure and light nourishment, as some of  
the

the ancients have remarked, afford a greater flow of animal spirits, which mounting towards the head, impel the human form upwards, and give it height, fair proportion, and lightness; while, on the contrary, more gross diet, depressing the animal spirits, arrests the height and urges the body into extraordinary thickness. Be this as it may—ghost or no ghost—this gross substantial body was enveloped in a loose dressing-gown of coarse flannel, which, adding a still more rueful appearance to his figure, was spotted and streaked in various parts with blood; while a cap of the same heavy material cast a deeper shade over a countenance naturally rough, dark, and stern, but on which the pallidness of terror, effacing the dark bronze of the complexion, and the black flame of passion adding at intervals a more livid hue, by turns contended for pre-eminence.

“Justice, major Thunder! I demand immediate justice from your hands on that swindling rascal, Paddy M'Cue, who  
has



has cheated me out of my money!" vociferated, in furious accents, the spectre, as he approached with his complaint the banquet-table; "make the fellow give me back my guinea and crown, or get me a hog I engaged from him."

Major Thunder threw himself back in his chair, elevated his head, which felt inclined to seek a reposing place on his breast, and with mouth distended on one side, one eye entirely closed and the other half shut, tried to recognize this claimant for justice, who appeared no other than doctor Acerbus himself *in propria persona*.—"What is all this about, doctor Acerbus?" stammered out the major, after a pause of successful recognition; "what complaint have you against the man?"

"The knave has swindled me out of my money, major; which I am resolved I shall get back, or he make good his bargain."

"What! is it Paddy M'Cue!—as brave  
a soldier

a soldier as ever shouldered musket, and a damned honest fellow? I know him—he is of your company, captain Fearless. But let us hear, doctor, the charges you bring against him—on your oath let us hear it; and here is the book,” he added, presenting the doctor a full bumper.—“Swear, man, and if your complaint be well established, you shall have justice done you, as certain as there’s sound in a drum’s head or discipline in the army.”

“That is all I want, gentlemen—justice, bare justice on the swindling knave—my money or the bargain; let him return the money, or make good the bargain.”

“What was the nature of this bargain?” inquired several voices at once.

“A subject! for which I was to pay him, on delivery, a guinea; and five shillings I gave him in advance for drink. He has got the guinea as well as the crown, and supplied me with no subject.”

“There is a proof of the fellow’s loyalty  
for

for you, doctor !” observed major Thunder ; “ the subject, you know, should always go with the crown, and not against it.”

“ The villain took me in ; he has got my money without having any subject to deliver in return. I request, major Thunder, you will order him to refund.”

“ Call the soldier in, and let us hear what he has to say in his defence,” ordered the major to the servant in waiting.

Plunket placed a chair for the doctor, and the officers pressed him to join their party ; but, maddening with rage, he declined both, and stamped from one end of the apartment to the other, muttering at every turn—“ *I must have my money or the subject.*”

Paddy M’Cue delayed not to attend the major’s summons ; he entered with a careless, unconcerned air, that appeared to defy the surgeon’s challenge, and claim from the officers all due regard for his conscious integrity. Scarce, however, had he made his appearance in the mess-room, than the  
enraged

enraged surgeon sprung on him with fury, and while with one hand he seized him by the throat, with the other he drew forth, from a greasy pouch in his wrapping-gown, a knife, and swore a most tremendous oath he would dissect him as he would a hog, if he did not give him back his money. The man, staying with great composure the raised knife, declared he would commit the dispute in question to major Thunder's decision; and give the doctor back his money, if his officers, seeing he had not fairly earned it, would give judgment against him.

"How could you earn it, you lying knave!" on this roared out the surgeon, "when you gave me no subject?"

"Did I not bring your honour one?" replied the other, with great calmness..

"Hell and damnation!" exclaimed the choleric surgeon, "does the fellow mean to laugh at me as well as chouce me out of my money?"

"It is evident he does not," interposed  
the

the major, "since he refers the matter in question to our decision. Pray be calm, doctor, and let us hear the merits of the case."

"Calm, sir, when I am robbed and bamboozled! Order the rascal, major Thunder, to make good his bargain, or by Heaven I will cut his bowels out this instant."

"I have already done so, as these gentlemen shall decide between us," said the soldier.

"Be composed, doctor Acerbus," entreated Plunket—"passion is generally thought rash in accusation, and rarely succeeds in making the impression it desires. Take a chair, and when you are quite calm, explain the nature of the dispute between you and this soldier; and these gentlemen shall then render justice to you, and punish as he deserves the delinquent."

"Zounds! lieutenant Plunket!—how can I be calm? Don't I tell you the fellow

low

low has got my money?—I have no subject.”

“If your honours would only listen,” said Paddy M’Cue, “while his honour here, the doctor, is getting cool, I would tell you the whole affair as it happened.”

“Tell it!” roared out the officers.

“Yes, tell it, knave,” repeated the surgeon, “just as it happened.”

“Why an’ so I will, sir, though you may not be pleased with me.—This gentleman, please your honours,” said the soldier, addressing the officers, “agreed to give me a guinea for a hog which I promised to procure him, and I spoke to my comrade, Will Devlin, to join me in getting one for the doctor.—‘Tis a venturesome thing, this raking up of dead men’s bones, Paddy,’ said friend Will, ‘and if you will take my advice, you will have nothing to do in the business. I am going fast, and as I like to serve a friend, when the last puff is out, take me to the doctor.’—It was no  
sooner

sooner said than agreed to; and so behold you, gentlemen, when I called about an hour ago to see Will, I found him stone dead, as he had promised. Thinking then I might as well earn the guinea by my friend as by any other, I rammed poor Will into a big sack, and carried him off to the doctor's—and a cursed heavy load he was, your honours. So, puffing like a broken-winded gazzin after a race, I hobbled into the dissecting-room at the hour appointed, where I meets the doctor, and says—‘ Here is the hog, doctor Acerbus, and where is the guinea?’—‘ You are a brave fellow,’ says the doctor—now, was not that the very word your honour said to me? and then, ‘ thrust the hog into that heap of bran there, and you shall have your reward for your trouble.’—‘ He sweated me, your honour,’ says I to the doctor.—‘ It is a bulky piece,’ says he; ‘ I did not think he was so big a fellow.’—‘ He died in his strength,’ says I, ‘ and

against his will, you know, doctor. There he is, and I wish your honour luck of him.' On which the good gentleman, God bless his honour! gave me the guinea agreed on. 'There he is, and he will say himself that is the whole truth of the matter.'

"You damned lying rascal!" roared out the surgeon, foaming with renewed rage, "why not tell the rest?"

"I have told the gentlemen my part, and leave the rest to your honour's relating," said the soldier, with provoking calmness.

"Ay, and a damned cheating part you played, villain! But I will have my money or vengeance."

"Be tranquil, doctor Acerbus," said the major; "so far as I have heard of the case, the soldier seems to have performed his part of the engagement."

"Death and fury! Major Thunder, do you believe the lying rascal?"

"Must



“ Must I not believe him, when you admit yourself he has delivered the subject?”

“ Hell and damnation! what subject?— But hear me, major Thunder.”

“ Yes, hear him, your honour,” said the soldier. “ Now tell the rest, doctor.”

“ I will tell it first on your throttle, you cheating, swindling knave!” cried the doctor, springing on the man with vehemence, “ if you do not give me back my money.”

The officers rose and interposed, to rescue the man from the violent grasp of the enraged surgeon, of whom they requested to be informed in what Paddy M'Cue had failed in his agreement.

“ There he is, the villain!” stammered out the angry son of Æsculapius, “ who had no sooner got my guinea and run away with it, than his brother knave, whom he had just deposited in the bran, started up, and so scared me out of my senses, that I should not have known where

I stood, if it was not for the swinging box he struck me across the cheek, which recalling me to my senses, convinced me the blow came from no lifeless hand, and that I had been cheated. This is the truth, major Thunder; and there stands one of the villains—he will not dare to deny it: so order him to give me back my money.’

“ It would be unfair to do so, doctor Acerbus,” replied major Thunder. “ Paddy M’Cue is an honest fellow, and has strictly performed his part of the agreement; why should you attempt to recede from yours ?”

“ Zounds, major Thunder ! do you too join the swindling rascals ?” exclaimed the surgeon, turning abruptly from the officer, with a look of mingled contempt and fury.

“ Hold, doctor !” answered the officer, with a grave important air, and catching him by the breast of the coat to detain him ; “ one word of advice I will give you : put up with your present loss now but never again, while you live and cu

*up*, buy a pig in a bag, for fear of a bad bargain."

Doctor Acerbus, swelling and blackening with rage, and so foaming at the mouth as to be incapable of speech, burst from the major (whose head by this time scarce balanced his heels) with a force that was near oversetting that gentleman's equilibrium, while a roar of laughter, swelling in merry changes from the gay board, pursued the retreating surgeon.

Irritated at the loss of his guinea, and even still more at being laughed at, the discomfited surgeon retired to his house in ill-humour, where, in snarling impatience and unmerited reproof, he vented his spleen on his unoffending wife and daughters. Throughout the night he meditated, with increasing rage, his loss and disappointment; and in the morning, still thirsting for revenge, hastened to the inn, and was at the bedside before lieutenant Plunket was stirring, to entreat he would

use his interest with major Thunder to have the soldier punished.

“Excuse me, doctor,” returned Plunket; “though I would be willing to oblige you, and that I do possess some interest with major Thunder, yet I cannot think of employing that interest in an act of cruelty towards a fellow-creature. The soldier, instead of punishment, deserves some credit for the trick he has played you. If you will take a friend’s advice, you will forgive the fellow; and to silence the joke, join heartily in the laugh he has raised at your expence.”

The surgeon, little disposed to relish such wholesome advice, retired, vowing revenge on the whole party.

## CHAPTER II.

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Never was soul inspir'd  
With livelier trust in what it most desir'd  
Than his. MOORE.

.....

Brave, liberal, just—the calm domestic scene  
Had o'er his temper breath'd a gay serene.  
FALCONER.

PLUNKET, roused by the voice of the surgeon from the sound sleep into which the stupifying effects of the wine had plunged him, started out of bed, and instantly re-collecting, with an involuntary sigh, the painful conflict he had still to undergo in parting with his friends at the castle, resolved, with a desperate firmness, the result only of despair, to meet it bravely.

On his arrival there (to which place he proceeded without delaying to appease the

doctor, or join in the laugh against him with the officers), he found the family assembled at breakfast. Sir Richard, still offended at what he termed Charles's unreasonable obstinacy in persisting to leave the castle, preserved, after the first matin salutation, a sullen silence. Lady Courteney expressed, with affected complaisance, her regret at his departure, and deplored the necessity he felt in his declining health for such sudden removal. Geraldine spoke little; that little, however, expressed a fervent wish for his perfect recovery; and affected, as it would seem, by his ill health and immediate departure, she looked melancholy and dejected. Plunket, moved at her dejection, felt a womanish weakness steal upon him, and concerned at having excited the good baronet's displeasure, he could with difficulty maintain the firmness he aimed at; fearing, therefore, in these violent emotions to trust his voice, he merely bowed in reply to lady Courteney's polite expressions of regret—cast on  
sir

sir Richard a supplicating look, that seemed to entreat he would not think him unworthy of his kind attentions, or ungrateful—while on Geraldine he scarce ventured to steal a glance, when, if his eyes for an instant unconsciously sought hers, their expression combined with all the tenderness of love, despair, and agony.

As the moment approached in which our hero was to depart, his agitation became more apparent—his feelings more ungovernable. Dreading that, in tearing himself from the loved presence of Geraldine, these feelings might betray his secret passion, he trembled to encounter the struggle of parting, and deferred to the very last the ceremony of leave-taking; but when his servant, wondering at his protracted stay after the orders for expedition given, led the horses round, he started suddenly from his seat, and with the precipitation of a man that seemed willing to fly himself, was hastening, without further ceremony, to the door.

“ You should have ordered a chaise for your journey, Charles,” said sir Richard, in a kind voice, on observing, with a compassion that triumphed over his recent displeasure, Plunket’s tremulous state; “ for your nerves appear so relaxed, you will not be able, I am afraid, to gain Dublin on horseback.”

Roused to sudden reflection by this remark, Charles stopped short, turned round to lady Courteney, and as he approached, replied to sir Richard, that though he now found himself unnerved, when he was on the way, the air would brace him. To lady Courteney then, with a firm voice, he offered his grateful acknowledgments for her polite hospitality; but, moved with filial affection towards the good-natured baronet, his tongue faltered as he bade him farewell, and expressed in tremulous tone his hope that he would not think him insensible or ungrateful, in consequence of the resistance he opposed to his pressing and kind solicitations.

“ You



"How I love you, my dear Charles;  
 "do you think of leaving us?"  
 "in a reproachful yet soft-

"do you still love me, my dear  
 "and balsam to my sick heart,"

Plunket, pressing sir Richard's  
 "hand with affection; "but excuse me, if  
 "I cannot now meet, as you would wish,  
 "your paternal invitation."

"I am afraid, my dear boy," said sir  
 Richard, returning the affectionate pres-  
 sure of his hand, "you are not well enough  
 to travel; and where could you recruit  
 better than here?"

Plunket replied not, but moved on to-  
 wards Geraldine, whom he approached,  
 trembling. Afflicted at his indisposition,  
 and filled with regret for his sudden de-  
 parture, the gentle girl, as she extended  
 her offered hand, raised her eyes all swim-  
 ming in tears, and cast on his pale face a  
 look expressive of such tender sorrow as  
 quite subdued him—speech failed, and his

words became inarticulate—he could only press her hand in violent emotion to his lips and bosom, and then, as if fearing to trust his voice with an adieu, rush precipitately from the apartment.

In the hall Charles encountered Fanny O'Grady, who, drowned in tears, waited there to bid him farewell. With filial affection he threw his arms round her neck to embrace her, while she returned his embrace with all a fond mother's tenderness, and with an anxious mother's thoughtful solicitude added a fervent blessing. He knew her to be truly his friend, and felt her endearments at that agonizing moment a cordial to his wounded heart.

“ Poor Charles is greatly indisposed,” said the kind-hearted baronet, as he returned from seeing our hero mount his horse at the hall-door to the breakfast-parlour; “ and I am greatly afraid this journey will knock him up entirely. How provoking that he would not remain here till his health was re-established !”

“ He

“ He is indeed quite out of order,” replied lady Courteney: “ but to me he seems rather to suffer from the agitations of a violent passion than from indisposition.”

Geraldine, who might perhaps have had similar thoughts, blushed at this intimation, and cast her eyes on the floor.

“ Can you not discover, sir Richard,” pursued lady Courteney, “ in Charles’s excessive impatience to abandon his real friends, and quit so precipitately the castle (for which he can give no proper cause), all the impetuosity of a strong passion, that urges him, in defiance of your paternal regard and our tender importunities, to seek its illicit object? I am concerned for the young man, because, notwithstanding this error of profligate youth, he has many good qualities, for which I highly esteem him; but that he is deeply entangled in some improper connexion he is ashamed of, or perhaps afraid to avow,

is

is what, from his continual absence of mind and violent emotions, I cannot question."

"Impossible!" exclaimed Geraldine, while the crimson on her cheek heightened to a still deeper glow with indignation. "Charles Plunket possesses a refinement of sentiment and purity of thought that elevate him above all such vile entanglement."

"He possesses," said sir Richard, "good morals and honourable principles, which should, I think, preserve him from all improper connexion."

"These *good morals* and these *honourable principles*, oppose, in young men of warm temperament, my dear sir Richard," answered lady Courteney, smiling sarcastically, "but feeble resistance to the dominion of the passions, especially in the army, where his brother-officers shall laugh to shame his morality, and present him continual examples that will render void, or of little use, his honourable principles."

Charles

Charles Plunket possesses, if there is penetration in woman, all the symptoms of a strong passion; and being kept secret from his best friends, in whom he ought to confide, it must be improper."

Lady Courteney spoke in a decisive tone, that rendered her opinion unanswerable; sir Richard replied not, and Geraldine (who was beginning to feel interested about her cousin Plunket), though she refused this allegation implicit faith, thought, on a second review of the question, her ladyship's suggestion very possible.

Meantime lieutenant Plunket, desirous to overcome an inclination which he considered incompatible with his nice sense of honour, and that he felt impossible to reconcile to his disinterested spirit, was flying, with the magnanimity of a hero, the too-fascinating object that had captivated his raptured senses, nobly resolved, if Heaven destined such an angel for his possession, that he would rather win her  
esteem

esteem by the triumph of his passions, than gain on her fancy by flattery—rather merit her regard by the splendour of his deeds, than steal with insidious art into her affections.

There appears, no doubt, in this resolution an inflexible pride, which, refusing to submit to all-powerful love, shall not meet the full approbation of all my fair readers; but let me entreat their indulgence for my hero, by remarking, that in him this pride was the attribute of an independent mind, that proudly rejects the good it has not by merit acquired, and on whose sensitive feelings the gifts of fortune weigh still heavier, when they bring with them, piercing deep into the soul, the subtle consciousness that he is destitute himself of the means of repaying these gifts. Charles Plunket, possessed of a pure incorrupt taste, attached little importance to wealth but as the source of a more extensive benevolence; yet from self-privation would he rather procure this delicious enjoyment,

enjoyment, than become debtor for it to the generosity of another. Neither could he endure the idea of receiving a fortune with a wife, to which his rank in the army (his sole possession) might not entitle him; as the sense of benefits on one side, and of obligation on the other, might, he imagined, destroy that connubial love which, to be truly perfect, must be reciprocal. Had he a principality in his possession, he would think it well shared with Geraldine Courteney, whose gentle nature, amiable disposition, and transcendent charms, would form a balance, and whom, without self-degradation on the part of her husband, might be elevated to the first rank: but that she should descend to him, would be in her, as he considered, a debasement of her exalted state in society; or that he should be enriched by her fortune, and raised to dignity and honour by her possessions, would prove subversive of his liberty and independence, and might hereafter render both unhappy.

Yet

Yet Plunket sought not wholly to subdue the hope he secretly encouraged of one day possessing such a treasure as the lovely Geraldine; on the contrary, every expectation of future felicity was combined with her idea; but it was only after the successful achievement of heroic and valorous exploits, to which he looked forward with all the sanguine enthusiasm of credulous youth—after the acquisition of well-earned laurels in the field of glory, that he dared hope to be rewarded with the possession of such an inestimable prize. Geraldine was still young, still little more than a mere child, and a few years, he thought, would only add, to the blooming and sportive attractions of early youth, the dignity of a person of matured reason and the soft graces of an interesting woman. To assail her imagination by flattery, or interest her passions in his favour by any particular assiduities, would be dishonourable; but to obtain her esteem by the purity of his sentiments, and win her affections



fections by the wisdom and worth of his counsel, in the correspondence which, with fraternal freedom, they were permitted to indulge, was, for the present, all he sought, but which indulgence might hereafter pave the way (should his own deserts entitle him, or sir Richard deem him worthy the hand of his daughter) to the attainment of the most exquisite felicity.

Charles felt anxious therefore to commence this correspondence, in which he might manifest the tender interest he felt in the happiness of his lovely cousin, without being too much hurried away by the ardency of his feelings, or losing possession of that self-control which her enchanting presence never failed to put to flight; hence the first night of his arrival in town was employed in so framing his thoughts, in a letter to Geraldine, as to restrain all the impetuosity of love, and disguise his feelings under the sober garb of tender friendship or fraternal regard. This proved indeed no easy task which he had imposed  
on

on himself, and before which every inclination to sleep fled completely ; for some of the most delicately-conceived, but glowing sentiments, were discarded, as expressing too much the warmth of passion, and others again rejected, as not conveying half what he felt. In this manner was the night consumed, and the morning following employed to as little purpose, in writing letters, which were no sooner finished than destroyed, as not one appeared, in his opinion, to possess that happy medium between glowing love and sober regard which could alone meet his approbation.

Our sanguine hero burned with equal impatience to continue his military career, in the hope of signalizing himself in such a manner as should procure him the approbation of sir Richard, forward his promotion, and excite the admiration of his brother officers. The winter, however, now drew near, and it was not likely that the Wellington army, to which he was attached,

attached, would, for the present, make any movements that should require such exertions. This opinion was suggested by the colonel of his regiment, whom he met on his arrival in Dublin, and who urged him to defer joining the army, now in winter quarters, as his leave of absence was not yet run out; but rather apply to have it renewed, till his own, granted for three months, should expire, when they would both return together.

Of all lieutenant Plunket's military acquaintance, this gentleman, a brave veteran, in the meridian of life, was his most particular and steady friend. He was the person who first brought our hero into notice, by assigning him the command in a hazardous and secret enterprise, which required not only powerful exertions of personal valour, but, being of a doubtful issue, great presence of mind—freedom and judgment to decide, with promptitude of execution. Colonel Clairfait, besides being a brave soldier, was a man of science;

science; he was of a silent, reserved disposition, and did not too profusely diffuse his thoughts in general conversation; but he was of deep and acute observation, and failed not to penetrate early, under the natural and becoming reserve of modest youth, the fine genius and useful acquirements of our hero; in consequence of which he passed over officers of superior rank, to make choice of Plunket for the command of this secret and dangerous expedition. His judgment had not in this instance deceived him; our hero most nobly distinguished himself, and carried the assault with signal prudence and unrivalled valour, of which the colonel took proper note, and strongly recommended him to the general. From this period a friendship was formed between these two gentlemen, flowing from admiration on one side and gratitude on the other; and to which friendly intercourse neither the reserved manners nor more advanced years of colonel Clairfait gave any obstacle.

Charles,

Charles, in the present state of his mind, when the tumult of much company would prove painful to him, and to indulge his own thoughts would only give strength to fancy and weaken reason, was highly pleased to meet this friend in Dublin, whose improving conversation would, he hoped, give a new turn to his ideas, and assist him to maintain the ascendancy he sought over his impassioned feelings; he was therefore the more easily induced to prolong his stay till colonel Clairfait and he should join the Wellington army together.

Plunket was delighted to perceive in his friend's family, to which he was immediately introduced, the most perfect unanimity of sentiment, and feelings quite congenial. Here, in his own house, the stern officer (who, on duty, wore to the men an air of austerity and reserve, and at the mess with his brother officers scarce unbent from deep thought his contemplative mind) was frolicsome with his children,

dren, and all frank cheerfulness and sprightly humour with his wife and friends. An exact observer of discipline, in the garrison or field he maintained his authority ; but in the domestic circle he resigned himself implicitly to the mild dominion of his wife, who ruled his family with admirable prudence, and during his absence devoted herself, in retirement, to the education of their children.

The delightful picture of domestic felicity which this happy family presented to the raptured imagination of our hero, was far from contributing to restrain his feelings ; but it supplied him with an occasion of describing scenes, and dwelling on subjects, in his letters to Geraldine, that expressed his own lively sentiments of conjugal happiness, and in which he seemed, without any distinct object in view, to pour out the tenderness with which his full heart was overflowing. To Miss Courteney he fancied at times he addressed the tender sentiments recited from the lips of  
colonel

colonel Clairfait to his wife; and when he described the youthful group that in sportive innocence surrounded the amiable pair, it was not without a secret wish that he and Geraldine might be blessed with such offspring. From descriptions such as these he frequently passed, as his feelings acquired a more placid tone, to literary subjects, anxious, as it would seem, to infuse into the mind of his fair correspondent such knowledge as should fit her hereafter for the discharge of a mother's essential duties.

To these letters Geraldine regularly replied with sisterly affection, pouring out in innocent simplicity every thought of her ingenuous mind, every impulse of her feeling heart; but, in which Plunket perceived nothing to inspire delicious hope, nor yet discovered aught to awaken apprehension or despair.

More than two months and a half passed on in this tranquil way, during which Plunket's health, from his feelings being

less agitated, considerably improved, when a positive interdict from lady Courteney put an end to the young people's epistolary correspondence. This severe prohibition was conveyed to Charles, by lady Courteney's orders, in a letter from Geraldine, which announced, in terms of poignant regret, that their correspondence must cease for the present; and in which, with an affecting and tender solemnity that endeared the amiable girl more than ever to our hero's impassioned heart, she bade him a sad farewell, and fervently recommended him, in all the dangers to which his hazardous profession should expose his person, to the continual protection of the Omnipotent.

This letter, though stabbing the disappointed Plunket deep in the soul, was written in a style of such melancholy tenderness as softened the wound it inflicted, by secretly infusing into it the balmy consciousness that the tender Geraldine shared his anguished feelings at this disagreeable  
and



and unexpected prohibition to their epistolary intercourse. This consciousness, however, though it might soften, had not power to assuage his grief at the complete extinction of all hope of further correspondence with Geraldine: he might still, through the medium of the baronet, from whom he had an occasional letter, hear of her—nay, he even thought he might, with the freedom of a son, expostulate on this unreasonable interruption to their accustomed interchange of letters; but the secret consciousness of his passion deterred him from the latter, and the tender solicitude of love could not rest satisfied with the casual information procured through the former. To demand of Geraldine herself an explanation of lady Courteney's motive in forbidding their writing, would, he was well aware, excite that lady's displeasure against her daughter, and draw forth a reiteration of her prohibition—or to seek it in a personal interview, by a journey to the castle, after his having so

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decisively

decisively resisted the pressing solicitations of sir Richard to prolong his stay, and after taking his final leave of the family previous to his sailing for the Continent, might, he thought, make him appear inconsistent, or as if he had some sinister view in this visit: yet to forego entirely all elucidation of the cause of this cruel order was what he could not reconcile his mind to.

The day lingered on in this disquietude of thought, and during the gloom of the night he revolved the same painful subject: a few days more, and he should depart the kingdom; how then could he reconcile to his distracted mind the idea of withdrawing so far from Geraldine, in doubt of hearing further particulars of that interesting being, who might in his absence become the prey of death, or be consigned to the arms of another, without his having other intimation of such dire events but what mere chance might offer! He resolved therefore to take a journey, unattended

attended and *incognito*, to the vicinage of the castle, where, through the interposition of his juvenile playmate and former field-attendant, Jerry Gauntlet (a person whom he knew to be possessed of much natural cleverness and considerable address), he hoped to obtain an interview with Miss Courteney, or at least learn, through him, the cause of lady Courteney's forbidding their future correspondence.

It may be asked why Plunket on this occasion did not think of addressing himself to Fanny O'Grady, who, our readers have reason to suppose, was his firm friend, and of whose tender affection and maternal regard he could entertain no question. He was indubitably certain of all that, but he knew also that she was of so impetuous a temper, and so indignant of all low cunning and deceit, as to render him apprehensive that, in her over-zeal to serve his cause, she would embroil herself with lady Courteney, of whom she entertained but

a doubtful, or rather contemptible opinion. On the warmth and strength of O'Grady's attachment he could depend with confidence; but as he knew her to be of a frank unguarded nature, and that nothing short of intrinsic merit could obtain her respect, he had not the same reliance on her prudence or circumspection: hence he preferred on this occasion (which, diverging from the plain open track honour would point out, deviated into subtilities that he could not reconcile to himself, or would not be able to justify to the candid Fanny) the agency of Gauntlet, who to subtle contrivance joined profound secrecy and unshaken fidelity.

## CHAPTER III.



Look on the tragic loading of this bed.

SHAKESPEARE.

.....

But a more perilous trial waits thee now—  
Women's bright eyes—a dazzling host of eyes,

— — — — —  
Of every hue, as love may chance to raise  
His black or azure banner in their blaze;  
And each sweet mode of warfare, from the flash  
That lightens boldly through the shadowy lash,  
To the sly, stealing splendours, almost hid,  
Like swords half sheath'd, beneath the downcast lid.

MOORE.

LONG before the grey dawn had shed a doubtful twilight over a cloudy sky, but guided by the light of a full moon, on a winter's morning our hero was on horse-back prepared for his expedition. Only intimating to his servant that he was going for a few days out of town on a short excursion,

excursion, he ordered him to wait at the hotel his return ; then taking the road, and pushing forward with an ardour that rendered him heedless of fatigue, he was several miles on the way before he thought of refreshment.

At the inn where Plunket stopped to breakfast, near forty miles from town, in the direction to the castle, he was known, and in almost every other part of the country through which he had now to pass to the place of his destination ; willing, however, on the present occasion to pass unnoticed, he here resigned his military surtout, and borrowed of the landlord a great-coat, of coarse, dark, heavy cloth, well suited to the asperity of the season, and in whose ample fold he was not only enveloped, but completely disguised. He also changed his noble charger of warlike mettle, which he left here to renovate, for a stout little hack, of unwearied spirit, just fitted to the road, and strongly recommended by the landlord. Thus prepared  
to

to resist the severity of the weather, he again set off in a course that deviated somewhat wide of the castle, but which led to the place where the widowed mother of Gauntlet resided, regardless of all fatigue, and despising the inclemency of the day, though it blew a rough tremendous gale, and greeted him direct in the teeth with rain and sleet by turns.

The dark shades of night, which even a thick haze pressed forward in advance, had for some time spread over the blackened atmosphere before our hero thought of stopping, when the little hack, notwithstanding his unwearied spirit, announced, by his slackened pace, his demand for a fresh feed and good rubbing. Plunket, thus compelled to a necessary suspension of his rapid course, stopped at a sorry inn or alehouse, which could not indeed afford himself any refreshment, but where he fed his exhausted beast; after which he proceeded again on the journey with renewed vigour. Thus journeying on, he had travelled

several miles in the dark, through lone and unfrequented roads, so deep and rugged as to render his progress not only tedious and disagreeable, but somewhat hazardous, when the moon arose, and with a lurid brightness that flamed dimly (like fire enveloped in clouds of smoke), appeared to light him to the widow Gauntlet's cabin.

The night by this time was considerably advanced, and our hero, drenched through with wet, worn out with fatigue, and his strength exhausted for want of food, felt scarce able to support the weight of the great-coat, heavy with the rain it had soaked, or to proceed, though now only a short distance from the termination of his journey. His horse was in little better condition; quitting him, therefore, he fastened the poor wearied animal by the bridle to a white-thorn tree, and leaped the ditch, to reach the house across a field in a diagonal direction.

As he approached, no gleam of light streaming from the narrow window gave  
reason



reason to suppose the old dame was up; he must, however, rouse her, and was walking leisurely round from the rear to the door in front for that purpose, when he perceived, as he turned the angle, two women, that seemed to have just issued from the house, hastening with rapid strides in a direction contrary to that by which he had advanced.

The door stood ajar, and he entered; all within was dark and silent; he called, but no answer was returned: a few half-extinguished embers still burned on the hearth, and the place smelled strong of spirits. Phunket, concluding from this last circumstance that the family had retired in a state of inebriation which caused them to leave the door unsecured, passed on to the room, to rouse them from their drunken slumber. Here he groped about for the bed, when, stumbling over something under his feet, he fell direct into it, and on a person that he instantly supposed there sleeping. He again called aloud, but

all was still silent; he shook the person on the bed, who, immoveable as death, stirred not. He sought the head, to pass the hand over the mouth, to assure himself this person respired; for, even to the ear, the gentle heaving of the breath was not perceptible; when, horrible to every alarmed sense, instead of the pliant lineaments of the face yielding to the finger's soft touch, a large rugged stone came in rude contact with his hand, under whose massive weight the head of the poor suffering wretch, if he still lived, must be desperately bruised.

Now conjecturing that some part of the dwelling had given way, under which this poor victim was crushed, Plunket was instantly retreating to seek aid, when he staggered, and fell against a heap of something covered with straw in a corner of the room. Recovering himself, he arose, and seizing a handful of the straw, rushed forth to the kitchen to light it at the burnt embers; then, with the faggot blazing in  
his

his hand, re-entered the chamber, where he saw that not accident here, but some murderous aim, intent to destroy, had directed the fell blow.

A young man, whose clothes and linen announced him of no ordinary rank, was stretched on the bed; and though every pulse of life was still, the retreating blood had not yet congealed in his veins, nor the ligaments which strung together each joint stiffened in death. It appeared that, while sunk in a profound sleep, into which he was probably plunged by the stupifying fumes of the hot liquor with which the house still steamed, the brains of this unhappy victim of barbarous malignancy were beat out by a ponderous stone; and the two women whom Plunket saw rush forth from the house, were, he could not doubt, the execrable perpetrators.

Shuddering with horror at so lamentable a spectacle, and filled with abhorrence of the sanguinary perpetrators, Plunket forgot Jerry Gauntlet, and the purpose for  
which

which he came hither, and thought only of seeking, and bringing to just punishment, the atrocious murderers, whom refusing to identify with his quondam field-companion, he supposed some new inmates of the cabin. With the faggot still blazing in his hand, he cast a glance of inquiry round the wretched apartment; it contained only a miserable bed, on which the murdered man was stretched, and a heap of potatoes, covered with some straw, in a corner. On a table in the kitchen there remained some broken fragments of meat, with some punch, which the late occupiers had left unfinished; but no person was there to be found to account for this barbarous deed, or arraign with the murder; on which Plunket, concluding that those whom he had seen depart from the house must have perpetrated the horrid crime, rushed instantly out, and following the direction which he had seen them take, hastened in pursuit of these ferocious women.

Our

Our hero continued above an hour a fruitless search, seeking wide of the house, to which he supposed the women would not venture to return; when, despairing of success (as the cloudiness of the night, and the thick covert with which the neighbouring fields were overspread, equally conspired to render, till the dawn of the morning, all pursuit abortive), he returned to the spot where he had left his poor famished beast, which instantly mounting, he rode towards the next town, with intent to lodge of this dire deed immediate information.

The moon, covered with thick clouds, was no longer perceptible, and a heavy shower of sleet, beating full in his face, left Plunket unconscious of the way he was pursuing; so that towards morning, instead of drawing near to the town, he found himself in a mountainous road, to which he was quite a stranger. As the morning cleared, he spurred on his jaded horse, to discover a house, at which he might

might inquire the name of the place where he was, and the nearest direction to the town he sought for, when the poor foundered animal, now scarce able to lift a leg, in descending a rough road, stumbled over a round stone, which tripping him, he fell, and in the fall threw his rider.

In this quick descent from his stumbling steed to the ground, Plunket came on his head, which received a severe contusion. Stunned by the blow, he remained in this prostrate state quite senseless, while the foundered hack, possessing as much sobriety of mettle as Don Quixote's Rosinante, stood in mute sympathy over his fallen master.

In this pitiable plight our fainting hero was found by an honest farmer, who, as soon as a drizzling morning had cleared up, was leading his men forth to labour. Alarmed at discovering a person in this senseless condition, the farmer at first thought him dead; but, on a closer examination, finding life was not yet extinct, he

he ordered two of the men to raise him up, and bear him gently to the house, whither he preceded them, with hasty stride and compassionate intent, to procure the fainting stranger immediate assistance.

The farmer, who conceived his wife well skilled in the balsamic art, hastened to rouse her out of bed, that she might lend the wounded stranger her assistance; but the ease-indulging dame, offended at her husband's freedom in disturbing her so early, turned from him, with angry growl and scowling brow, to take another nap.

“Ah! will you then refuse, dear Sarah,” said the farmer, coaxingly, “to take on you the office of the charitable Samaritan, whose part you can so well perform, and pour oil into the wounds of the poor bruised stranger? The unfortunate gentleman will die, if you do not get up soon and help him: he is more than half already.”

There was a charm in the word *gentleman* that instantaneously rivetted the attention

tention of the wife, who, turning half round, demanded—"What gentleman do you speak of, George? A gentleman in these wild ragins would be a strange sight truly!"

"A fine young gentleman, wife, by appearance, whom we found senseless on the road, thrown from his horse, and cut on the head most desperately. The men are bringing him here. Get up and give him what help you can, dear Sarah."

"A fine young gentleman, you tell me, George," said the now-complaisant dame, as she hurried on her clothes—"who can he be, I wonder? or where could he be going?—But he is half dead, you say. I must, however, try my skill to save him."

"We found him dead in a faint, and his poor dumb beast standing quietly by him; but you will make him 'live agen, wife. Here he comes; make haste, dear honey."

"Go, George, and have him placed gently on a chair in the parlour. I shall be out directly."

Plunket,



Plunket, roused by the motion caused by the men in conveying him to the house, and by the blood which gushed from a wound in his head, out of the long fainting-fit into which this wound, the shock of the dreadful spectacle he had beheld in the cabin, and the complete exhaustion of strength from fatigue, want of nourishment and rest, had all conspired to plunge him, gave signs of returning life by opening his eyes wildly, and inquiring, in half-inarticulate words, whither they were bringing him ; but his mind, still oppressed with the horrid image of the murdered man in the cabin, rambled wildly on this subject, and gave utterance to his confused thoughts in occasional bursts of incoherent expressions, conveying, however, no distinct idea of what he meant to his hearers.

In a few minutes Mrs. Tomlison, the farmer's wife, came forth from an inner apartment to the parlour, bringing lint to dress the wound, and all the apparatus necessary

necessary for the operation. Plunket, languid and faint, and the deep crimson of the blood most terrificly contrasting the ghastly hue of death on his pallid cheek, reclined with his head against the breast of a man, whose encircling arms supported him in a chair. The good-wife, who, even in this disordered state, concluded instantly, from his air and dress, that our hero must be a gentleman, advanced, examined the wound in his head, from which she dexterously separated with her scissars the clotted hair, then applied to the gaping orifice a certain powerful styptic, which she never knew fail of effect, and bandaged up the head. This operation performed, Mrs. Tomlison felt the gentleman's pulse, which finding extremely low, she motioned with a sagacious nod of the head at her husband, saying—"I tell you, George, there is something more amiss than this wound, which, though a large gash, is not very deep, with this poor gentleman.

gentleman. We must have him laid on the bed, and examine if he is any where else hurted."

To prepare for this second removal, the skilful dame poured some hartshorn drops into a cup of water, which she caused our fainting hero to swallow: he revived a little, when, again questioned if he felt otherwise hurt than in his head, he quieted the apprehensions of his alarmed hostess by assuring her, in a calm, though faint voice, he had suffered no other injury; that he was now, thanks to her compassionate attention, considerably better, and as it was of importance to him to gain the town of ———, he would try to proceed on his journey.

To this the good-natured dame opposed every possible argument, declaring repose of most essential consequence in his present relaxed state, and the only remedy which could restore him. Our hero felt himself reluctantly compelled to subscribe to this opinion, for, on attempting to rise, he

he felt every joint bound up in excruciating pain, and again sunk back on his chair with weakness. In the violent perspiration, brought on by his exertions in search of the two women after his rapid journey, he had soaked from his wet clothes the damp, which almost instantaneously produced on his stiffened limbs this painful effect, and by the sudden chilling of his overheated blood, menaced him with severe indisposition; to remedy which Mrs. Tomlison, with the men's assistance, had him conveyed to her own chamber, speedily undressed and laid on the bed, where, after she had administered a warm drink, he soon sunk, overwhelmed with weakness and fatigue, into a heavy dozing.

Meantime farmer Tomlison's wife, who was minutely attentive to every particular, and sagaciously observant of the unknown gentleman, was much struck with his person and appearance; from the fine texture of his linen, and the superior quality of the cloth he wore, she augured him of no inferior

inferior rank; and from the beauty of his face and person, which shone forth in despite of the paleness of death and extinction of animation, she conceived him a fit hero for a romance, and had no objection to provide for him a heroine. On a plan to this effect her thoughts most busily revolved, while with seeming good-nature she ministered relief to his wound, and succoured him in his weakness.

This woman, who, by the constant study of novels, was better skilled in the theory of love than practised in the duties of natural affection, eloped from her parents, before she was quite sixteen, with a lover. The father, a hearth-collector, had a few hundred pounds lying by to procure a husband for this his eldest and favourite child, and unwilling to throw them away on a mere pauper, he had the fugitives pursued, his daughter brought back, and, for fear of a second elopement, married a few days afterwards to a substantial farmer, of nearly his own age, and of quite  
his

his own choosing. Thus forced by parental authority into a union she disliked, the romantic young lady considered herself the victim of disappointment and oppression ; and instead of sharing with the good-man the labours of their state, gave herself up to lassitude and indolence, wilfully neglecting all useful employment, and seeking no amusement but that which she found in the perusal of novels and romances.

This listless kind of life produced ill health, which, with her extreme youth, nearly caused her death in giving birth to her first infant. The husband became alarmed for her life, and in her present dangerous indisposition, forgot all her former neglect of domestic cares and inattention to useful occupation ; an eminent physician was not only immediately called in, but, as she continued a long time in a languid state, retained for several weeks in continual attendance.

From this period, perpetual quacking  
with

with herself rendered Mrs. Tomlison quite an adept in the diseases of others, for whom (anxious to play, for the sake of effect, the lady Bountiful) she was continually prescribing certain remedies, many of which were known only to herself, but which she considered of sovereign efficacy. Whether the operations of dame Nature, or the nostrums of dame Tomlison, performed the cure, several of her patients, it was said, received great benefit from her prescriptions; and these widely spread her fame throughout the neighbourhood, to the peculiar gratification of the farmer, who was a kind-hearted man, and to the more diffusive extension of the good-wife's practice.

This couple had now, for several years, borne, in a dull jog-trot, the yoke of matrimony; and had had several children, eight of whom miraculously survived the almost-certain mortality of perpetual dosing. Seven of these children were daughters, the four eldest of whom were now

grown up, and whose delicate entanglements, delightful adventures, and final establishment in high life, occupied all the mother's attention. To these dear objects of her future plans her first thoughts were directed, the moment she heard of the wounded gentleman, with whom she instantly combined the idea of sudden love and a romantic adventure. The eldest certainly claimed the preference, from seniority of birth, and from holding in her mother's regard a higher degree of estimation; but unfortunately this young person (whom the father called Sally, out of regard to his dear wife, when he was menaced with the dread of losing her, but which Gothic and barbarous appellation the mother changed, on her recovery, to the more gentle and dulcet denomination of Selina) was, from the constant indisposition of Mrs. Tomlison (whether of mind or body I shall not pretend to say), usually employed, while yet a mere child, in household occupation and the superintendence of



of the dairy; so that she early acquired a strong and robust frame, well befitting her coarse employment, and possessed nothing of beauty to recommend her, but a cheerful countenance and healthful colour, the result of a serene mind as well as sound body.

Miss Juliette (to which elegant refinement her grandmother's good old simple name of Judy was also modified), the second in point of years, laboured not under the same clumsy disadvantage as her senior sister; she was, thanks to the indefatigable attention of her fond mother to procure her a delicate shape, and to the power of medicine, as slim as the complete deprivation of flesh could leave skin and bone. Yet, with all the potency of physic and the care of Mrs. Tomlison, symmetry was still wanting to Miss Juliette's *fine* form, for nature had unfortunately formed the joints so large, and strung them so loosely together, that she would make, in

a state of nudity, if the painter's rude hand dare to remove the incumbrance of dress, an admirable picture of Death upon wires, to scare naughty children; and to which the colour of what blood might appear in the pale cheek, or the faint beam of the languid eye, could stand no great objection in the fair portrait.

Of the other two girls whom Mrs. Tomlison, in her sage thoughts, imagined old enough for preferment, the one was a romp, possessing, with great flippancy of tongue, a low vulgar freedom of manners quite disgusting; the other a dull mope, silent, stupid, and unmeaning.

Yet, with the blaze of charms such as these, the politic mountain dame intended that her daughters should unitedly storm, while the fortification was still weak, the heart of the wounded stranger, or that one of the four should slyly intrude herself into the possession; and no sooner did she find our hero sunk in sleep, than, having already  
ready

ready meditated his defeat, she stole forth to the kitchen, to commune with the misses on this interesting subject.

“Hurry, my dear girls,” said the thoughtful mother, “and get your best clothes in order, that you may dress yourselves against the gentleman shall awake and require some refreshment. I see, from this adventure, that your good fortune, or the god of love, Adonis, designs him for one of you ; be then all alacrity to attend and charm this noble stranger.”

“I am sure, mother,” answered Selina, “I should have no objection to do any thing to serve the poor gentleman, if it did not too much interfere with the stripping the cows, which you know must now be looked to ; and if, after that, I was to go dress myself, how am I to set the runnet, or press the whey from the cheese-vat ?”

“It is time enough to dress towards the turn of the day, when the morning work is entirely over,” observed Mrs. Tomlison ;

“ the gentleman will not wake for some hours, I am certain.”

“ And sure, mamma,” drawled out Miss Juliette, “ you would not have me forget the delicacy of my sex, and demean myself by attending on this gentleman? When he is able to leave his chamber and come out to the parlour, I will have no objection to sit and converse with him, or read some book for his entertainment.”

“ Your mother, Juliette, who, though a vulgar farmer’s wife, is no ways ignorant herself of the *etwaquet* of good breeding, shall not ask you to transgress the slippery bounds of female *corum*; but a polite attention methinks might be pleasing to the gentleman, and might get for one of you no bad conquest.”

“ I am sure,” said Selina, “ the best attention I can shew him will be to scald a chicken, and make a little nice broth agen he’s able to take it. I hope you have got a smite of mace for it, mother?”

“ Yes, that same may be proper, child;  
but

but we must see first, from the state of the gentleman's pulse, whether chicken-broth would be fit for him. You sha'n't, however, Selina, lose your chance, but must bid fair for his heart as well as another; though I am afraid your great coarse form, red arms, and rough fist, will never become a gentleman's lady."

"Yet I wouldn't, mother, change my coarse form and healthy colour to be as fine-shaped as poor Skinny, who, though you be always doctoring, hasn't, after all, the colour of the victuals."

"I am not afraid, however, I shall suffer by a comparison with my sister Selina," said Miss Juliette, proudly. "Her dairy-maid plumpness and high colour may, to be sure, become *her*, but in me it would be quite vulgar."

"May be so, sister; but it's a bad skin, you must allow, that wont shew what's put in't," said Selina, as she tripped lightly off, notwithstanding her bulky size, to the dairy.

## CHAPTER IV.



No art was spar'd, no witchery—all the skill  
Her demons taught her was employ'd to fill  
His mind with gloom and ecstasy by turns—  
That gloom, through which frenzy but fiercer burns—  
That ecstasy, which from the depth of sadness  
Glares like the maniac's moon, whose light is madness.

MOORE.

It was drawing towards night, when Plunket awakened out of the deep sleep into which the fatigue of the former day had fast locked his torpid senses. On his first awakening, not able to recollect where he was, he was starting up to survey the apartment, when a sudden twitch of pain reminded him of the wound in his head, which recollection was immediately followed by a retrospect of his own precipitate expedition, and the dire spectacle in the cabin. He shuddered as he recalled  
to

to memory that horrid scene, and sighed for the depravity of human nature. Mrs. Tomlison, perceiving, by his sigh, that the stranger had awaked, approached the bed, and inquired, in gentle accents, if he were better? Her pale countenance and fragile form, strong emblems of excessive debility in herself, reminded him at once of the compassionate woman, who, forgetful of her own weakness, had that morning employed such active and effective exertions for his recovery; his reply, therefore, that he was better, was accompanied with a grateful acknowledgment that he owed it to her goodness and kind attention.

While Plunket was thus addressing Mrs. Tomlison, that lady beckoned to the youngest of the four girls, who instantly approached, and spread a small table by the bedside for his repast, with which Selma in a few minutes entered. Our hero, refreshed by his long sleep, partook of his light meal with an appetite that indicated renovated health and renewed spirits. Mrs.

Tomlison was delighted to perceive this favourable change, and while she congratulated the gentleman on his sudden recovery, felicitated herself on the happy success of her surgical application, which she exultingly declared she never knew fail of the proper effect in any instance whatsoever. Our hero could do nothing less than return the compliment, by proclaiming himself a most fortunate example of her extraordinary skill and successful application, having in a few hours not only rescued him from death, but so far restored him to health as to render him now quite able to continue his journey, which he intimated an intention of rising to accomplish.

Our traveller's design of departing immediately, which would entirely frustrate the views of the *charitable* Mrs. Tomlison, gave her instant alarm, and she opposed it with every argument which her medical knowledge and *tender* interest in his perfect re-establishment could supply. While  
he



he was proving his ability to proceed, and she insisting on the probability, if he did, of a relapse, which was, as she learnedly maintained, more dangerous than a first attack, the farmer entered, and supporting his wife's side of the question, assured him it would be dangerous, even if he had not met the ugly accident he did, to travel at such a late hour in that wild country, where he might as well have been murdered last night, as the poor gentleman who was found dead in a sand-pit that morning.

Charles, shuddering at the idea of murder, and apprehensive that this might prove another deed of the same atrocious nature as that of which he beheld the unhappy victim, inquired the particulars; when he was informed by the farmer, that in a place about seven miles distance, and in the very direction from whence he had come last night, the son of an opulent farmer was found thrown in a sand-pit, with his head all bruised and his very brains

beat out in a most dreadful manner; that, on inquiry, it was discovered the last place where this young man was known to have been, was at the house of a widow convenient to the fatal spot, with whose daughter he had held for some time back an illicit connexion; and that the mother and daughter, supposed to be the perpetrators of this vile deed, were instantly apprehended and committed to prison.

Plunket, recognizing in this account the murdered person whom he beheld stretched on the bed in widow Gauntlet's cabin, inquired, in tremulous accents, that spoke his lively apprehensions of who were the murderers, the name of these two women; when he was inexpressibly shocked to learn they were no other than the mother and sister of his former juvenile companion, the nearest kindred of Jerry Gauntlet, whom he was now come to seek, and on whose faithful attachment he had relied so implicitly. Recoiling with just horror and indignation from all further intimacy  
with

with a person thus descended from, and allied to murderers—partaking perhaps their guilt, or the vile agent of the execrable crime now committed, Charles instantly resolved to inquire no farther after Gauntlet; and as the women were already apprehended, and would most likely be brought to condign punishment, justice required of him in her cause no farther exertion; he therefore the more readily acceded to the pressing solicitations of the farmer and his wife to remain for the night, determined to set early off on the following morning to Dublin.

This resolution formed, and feeling himself considerably recovered, our hero proposed rising, to enjoy with greater freedom the society of the good family, hoping by such exertion he should be more likely to secure a tranquil night's rest, preparatory to his journey. Mrs. Tomlinson, much pleased with this proposal, retired, to leave the gentleman at liberty to dress,

dress, while the farmer remained to lend his assistance.

Meantime in the parlour (which was only separated from the chamber where Plunket reposed by a thin partition) all was bustle and confusion. Mrs. Tomlison's orders, issued in whispers, were executed with fumbling precipitance, and such guarded caution to make no noise, that, in jumbling persons and things against one another, it produced, instead of silence, not only sound, but a continued reiteration. The guest at last made his appearance, and was received by Mrs. Tomlison and her daughter Juliette with every demonstration of what their perusal of books, descriptive of high life, taught them to conceive polite hospitality. Another of the girls, wriggling on the corner of a chair behind the door, and not knowing what to say or do, sat fidgetting with her fingers, which she passed and repassed through the bars of the chair, every now  
and

and then stealing a glance from beneath a scowling brow at the handsome stranger. A third, presenting a front of flaming brass, and peering rudely in his face, declared, after all his battering, he would look very well, if it was not for the ugly bandage her mother had tied round his head, and which made a downright fright of him; while the fourth, more usefully employed than all the rest, was in the kitchen, preparing coffee and a hot cake for his entertainment.

The farmer stepped out to see that the cattle were all made up for the night, and left the strange gentleman to be entertained by his wife and daughters.

“That was to be sure an unlucky accident, Mr.—but I don’t know your name yet, that you met on our road here,” said the pert one, as she placed a chair for Charles.

“I can never, ma’am, esteem that accident unlucky, which has introduced me to the acquaintance of such kind and hospitable friends,” returned our hero.

The

The girl laughed, and Mrs. Tomlison, delighted with this compliment, was preparing to make a speech, when Plunket (though reluctant to be known, lest an account of his rash and secret expedition should reach the castle, yet perceiving, from the adjunct which the girl so slyly put in, the necessity of announcing himself, and disliking all improper reserve or want of candour), addressing the mistress of the house, made her acquainted with his name, rank, and connexions, and intimated that he was on a journey of business to the town of ———, when he met the accident which had introduced him to their hospitable dwelling, but from the bad effects of which her extraordinary skill, and the kind attention of her family, had humanely preserved him, and impressed on his grateful mind a lasting and indelible sense of their compassionate nature, and his great obligation.

The young lady of daring brass was beginning, with a rude freedom not to be  
awed

awed or silenced, to put importunate questions to our hero, when, desirous to evade her inquiries, he declined the chair she presented, and walked about the parlour. Mrs. Tomalison, too polite to continue sitting while the gentleman refused to take a chair, rose also, and anxious to procure her guest entertainment, directed his attention to the ornaments which decorated the apartment.—“ This, sir,” said she, “ is the picture of my grandmother; she was a great beauty in her day, as you may perceive from her picture, and of very good family. And there beside her is my grandfather, with that roll of paper in his hand; he was seneschal of a manor court, and a great larned schollar.”

Phunket paid some handsome compliments on the beauty of the lady, whose perfection of feature, he politely insinuated, as he glanced his eye from the portrait to his charmed auditress, she had transmitted to her posterity—and on the  
air

air of profound erudition so apparent in the serious countenance of the gentleman, which acquirement, he made no doubt, if he might be allowed to judge from appearances, the talent for attaining was equally hereditary in the family.

The natural genius, when occasion presents itself, will break out involuntarily; Plunket possessed an admirable turn for irony, and though truly sensible of, and grateful for the kindness of these good people, he could not resist the present opportunity of indulging the native bent of his mind in this exaggerated praise, which the lady's self-consciousness of exterior charms and interior worth evidently challenged. Charmed with the politeness of her guest, and gratified in the display of her own talents, she thus continued the observations:—"Here, sir, is a fine history-piece over the chimney; it is the god Atlas riding on mount Diana, and attended by the Muses. But what need I explain



plain them things to you, sir, who must have read all about 'em in Homer's Virgil, and have taste to admire the ancients?"

Miss Juliette, not pleased that her mother, by her classic eloquence, should occupy so much of lieutenant Plunket's attention, came forward, and with a simper assured him, if he gave the preference to the more refined works of modern literature, she could, from her small library, supply him with some very interesting and well-written novels, among which she would particularly recommend to his perusal Seymour Castle and the Hermit of the Rock.

Charles entreated permission to decline her obliging offer, assuring Miss Juliette, with great politeness, that the company of such kind friends precluded, for the present, all relish for study.

"I am sure, Mr. Plunket," replied the young lady, "you have too refined a taste not to be fond of reading; and if you have never read them books, they will be quite  
a treat

a treat to you—the one has such wonderful adventures! and the other is such a description of high life, with such fine sentiments! But you have read them already, I suppose?”

Plunket replied in the negative, and the young lady returned—“I am rejoiced to hear it, for you will be quite delighted to peruse them; and yet I am sorry again you have not read them, I should be so glad to hear your sentiments of them books, and your opinion of the characters; and it is so delightful to talk over, with a well-informed person, what one has read! Pray have you read, sir——” And here this studious young lady, of retentive memory, poured on the astounded ears of our hero an ample catalogue of the names of different novels which she had read; and to all of which, though it must grievously impeach his taste for literature in the mind of his fair querist, he was compelled by sacred truth to answer in the negative.

“In

“In solitude such as this, captain Plunket,” said Mrs. Tomlison, “reading is an inexpressible recourse to young people; and it also prepares them for what they are to see and expect when they enter the world. Books have been to this, in this stupid place, the chief course of amusement to me and my daughter Juliette, who has a fine taste for reading; but it shall not be always the case, for Mr. Tomlison is determined to remove out of this savage country, and take a house in a more fashionable and populous neighbourhood, where we may get respectable Protestant connexions for our daughters; and instead of the Romans here, who I call the Goats and Vealins, mix with persons of refined manners.”

There were times when lieutenant Plunket would not only have enjoyed with high zest the eloquence of this learned lady, but would have been tempted, by hyperbolical compliments, to have drawn it forth more profusely; his spirits, however, were now too much depressed to enjoy mirth; and  
though

though that were not the case, he possessed too great good-nature to promote a laugh at the expence of a person to whose kind attentions he stood so much indebted. He felt therefore at a loss to reply, when the maid of dauntless effrontery relieved him by inquiring—"Are there no goats, mother, but in the mountains? or is it from here the people of the low countries get all their weanlings? There may be, I should think, as great *calves* among them as with ourselves."

"Goats!" repeated Miss Juliette, with a scream; "can you be so ignorant, child, as not to know the Goats my mother means are a barbarous people, that have no larning or polite manners?"

"Then I suppose," retorted the other, "they have all long beards, even to the very women and children, like our goats here."

"What a simpleton! and how effervescently you betray your ignorance, sister!" said Miss Juliette.

The

The mother frowned, and Plunket could with difficulty repress a smile, when the farmer entered, and by giving a new turn to the conversation, relieved our hero from the trouble and embarrassment which he felt in being compelled to take a part in that which was going forward among these ladies.

With the tea, coffee, and hot cake, Selina made her appearance; and, though ignorant, not affected—and if homely, not pretending to politeness or refinement—she seemed the most rational, and proved by far the most useful of the females, and hence obtained from lieutenant Plunket, by merit in her own way, that attention which the self-sufficient Juliette, with still less pretensions, claimed through confident assumption and mere vanity. They sat after tea to a late hour, and till the farmer, in defiance of his efforts at good-breeding, dropped asleep; and Charles, notwithstanding the continued exertions of the ladies to entertain

entertain him, quite wearied, discovered an inclination to retire.

When our hero bade his friendly entertainers good-night, he once more intimated his purport of departing early the next morning, and again repeated his grateful thanks for their humane attention and polite hospitality to a wounded stranger. Mrs. Tomlison opposed, with much seeming good-nature, his purposed departure till the wound in his head should be quite healed, maintaining, with a great display of medical knowledge, that rest would be absolutely necessary for a few days, to promote its perfect cure, and preserve him from fever. However, the state of his pulse in the morning, she added, should decide; and though, whenever he would depart, she should regret the loss of his agreeable society, yet now, while he retired to bed, she would go prepare for him a composing draught, that should assist his convalescence.

Mrs.

Mrs. Tomlison perceived, with extreme vexation and regret, that this sudden departure of her guest would completely frustrate her views, and suspend, if not entirely obviate, the happy effects which she promised herself from her *benevolent* exertions in favour of this stranger, who, as a gentleman, according to his present appearance, and offering in perspective some hope of future advantage, unquestionably claimed her attention; not indeed from any weak motive of compassion to a suffering fellow-creature, with which childish feeling (sentiment answering, in her wise opinion, the same purpose) we shall not be so unjust as to impeach the prudence of the lady. While employed, therefore, in preparing the promised draught, which she was determined to render of potent, if not composing efficacy, the skilful dame thought of a certain succedaneum, ycleped love powder, which supplying, by a false fire, the force of love, might work on our hero's heart

the expected charm, and timely prevent the retreat he meditated.

Of this love-inspiring potion, prepared by Mrs. Tomlison and administered by Miss Juliette, one of the component parts was opium, which the sagacious mother mixed in such nice proportions, and was to supply at such stated periods, as might produce and keep up a most delightful exhilaration of spirits, and which, playing on the raptured imagination, could scarce fail, as she hoped, to present to his delighted fancy, in enchanting array, the seducing charms of her fair daughters. However, whether the attractions of one counteracted the charms of another, or so many laying claim to his adoration divided that attention among the whole which should have been exclusively fixed on one, it is impossible to ascertain; but the truth is, the idea of each passed as rapidly over his mind as the quick-changing figures in a glass, and left as little impression: Geraldine, his adored Geraldine, was the only image



image to which his agitated thoughts every moment recurred, and which his disordered mind, like the shadow of a single bright star on a rough expanse of troubled waters, continually reflected.

In the morning, Plunket felt himself so weak and languid for want of composing sleep, and so spiritless when the effect of the opium began to wear off, that he thought not of commencing his journey; while Mrs. Tomlison, pleased with the effect already produced, and auguring certain success from the continued repetition of this powerful specific, repeated the dose at such proper intervals as to keep our hero for three days in a continued delirium. His strength, exhausted for want of rest, which, in the disorder of his mind, he found it impossible to enjoy—and also through the neglect of proper nourishment, for which he had neither appetite or relish—produced a general relaxation of the frame, that most powerfully aided the quacking dame's art, and brought on

a slow fever; a complete alienation of reason ensued, and his judgment, weakened or obscured, lost all control over the imagination; when his thoughts incessantly recurred to his beloved Geraldine—her lovely image was continually flitting before his disordered fancy, and her name, in a tender and pathetic address, every instant escaping his parched lips.

The ambitious mother took instant alarm, at the frequent repetition of this dear name, for the success of her project; and the daughters, to the exception of Selina, who did not raise her views beyond a farmer, were, particularly Juliette, sadly disappointed. The place which each of these, stimulated by the prudent matron, encouraged a hope to occupy in the gentleman's heart, they found already tenanted by another; and, hopeless of dislodging this occupant, their assiduities to the invalid relaxed, and they became indifferent about his recovery, unless it were to get timely rid of a burthen, of which they were now  
completely

completely wearied. Mrs. Tomlison, having her hopes of a gentleman son-in-law thus crushed in their birth, discontinued her medicine, on which the delirium ceased, the fever abated, and our hero, left once more to the operations of nature, again became convalescent.

Thus suddenly awakened from the delirium which had held his senses enchained for some days, Plunket was most unexpectedly surprised by a visit from doctor Acerbus, whose polite attention, in the present case, he would have been willing to dispense with, or that of any other acquaintance.

Attending a patient in the neighbourhood, the doctor had been informed that a young gentleman, who had fallen from his horse, lay dangerously ill at George Tomlison's for several days, and it remained a matter of great astonishment to all the neighbourhood that nobody came to inquire after this person, and that no medical assistance was sent for. On obtain-

ing this information, the doctor (urged by the humane wish of rendering himself serviceable—or prompted perhaps by a desire of gain—or stimulated by curiosity, which is betimes as strong an impulse in the human mind as any other, and the origin of many useful discoveries) called to see the sick and wounded stranger, in whom he was much amazed to recognize his late refractory patient, lieutenant Plunket, who, after having manifested such a ridiculous inclination to escape his care before he was half restored to health, had now, with even still greater absurdity, committed himself to the unskilful hands of an ignorant quacking woman.

Curious, as most persons of a philosophic turn of mind are, to trace the cause from whence could spring in human nature such inconsistency, doctor Acerbus, with great apparent kindness and some *interest*, entreated permission to examine Charles's head, and inquired how he came by such disagreeable accident.

Plunket,

Plunket, though a good deal provoked at being discovered by an occasional visitor at the castle in such a place, yet suppressing his disquietude, and assuming a tranquil air, merely stated that he came into that quarter to seek a friend, whom he wanted to see before he would join his regiment; and that having lost his way, and being surprised by night, he was riding on at mere conjecture, in the hope of coming up to a house or meeting some person who would set him right, when his horse stumbled, and he fell. The contusion on his head, which he had received in this fall, and which he now exhibited for the doctor's inspection, was but trifling at first, and had now ceased to give him pain or uneasiness; yet it was attended, he remarked, with a fever and delirium, for which he could not account, and which had alone confined him at George Tomlinson's.

It was at first but a mere scratch, the doctor discovered, that could scarce have

confined him to bed a single day, and, now quite healed, required no further application. "Yet it has rendered you," the doctor added, "as feverish as the amputation of a limb, and confined you almost as long. So much for quackery and nostrums!"

Plunket with surprise heard mention of long confinement, but when he learned the exact number of days which had flowed unconsciously by in this state, to extreme surprise was added tormenting disquietude at the idea that it was on this very morning colonel Clairfait and he were to have sailed for the Continent; and that the colonel, unknowing whither he had withdrawn himself, or unable to divine the cause of his absence, was, in all probability, gone off without him, in high displeasure.

Desirous to repair this error, into which, by yielding at first to a weak impulse, he had been unconsciously betrayed, Plunket, with an impetuosity that amazed the doctor,

tor, and which he thought marked nothing of ceremonious good-breeding towards himself, ordered his horse, and bidding a hasty farewell to Tomlison's family, to whom he politely expressed his grateful acknowledgment for their kindness and hospitality, proceeded direct to Dublin, without taking Dermont Castle in his way, or seeming, in his impatience to be gone, to recollect that he had friends in that quarter. He stopped not, unless to feed his horse, till he had gained the inn where he left his charger: here the day was drawing towards a close, but unwilling to lose time or relax his course, he again took the road, after a slight repast, and falling in with the mail-coach, travelled in safety throughout the night, and reached Dublin by morning. His servant, alarmed at his absence, and unable to satisfy colonel Clairfait's inquiries as to the cause, had been, the two preceding days, to seek him at the houses of Charles's different acquaintances, for several miles within the vicinity

of Dublin, and was now preparing to set off for the castle on the same search, when his timely arrival quieted the man's apprehensions, and prevented his purposed journey.

Plunket learned with grateful transport that his friend, colonel Clairfait, filled with disquieting alarm on his account, would not sail till he had gained of his brother officer some certain information; he delayed, therefore, only to dress till he waited on this gentleman, and by his welcome presence put to flight at once every apprehensive conjecture; and then satisfied his curiosity as to the cause of his absence, by a candid acknowledgment of the motive of his journey, and a full detail of the adventure which occurred in this romantic expedition.

The colonel, though willing to excuse his passion for an amiable object, and ready, from his acquaintance with the family connexion and character of the parties, to encourage in him a hope of its  
being



being ultimately successful, could not but condemn his having recourse to so indirect a means of gaining information as that through Jeremiah Gauntlet, when it was so much more honourable to seek an explanation from sir Richard or Miss Courteney, through Fanny O'Grady.—Plunket, who was indeed all truth and candour, and ever open to conviction, now perceived that a false refinement had betrayed him into a line of conduct that might justly be looked on as mean and artful—in causing him to seek, through the agency of an unworthy person, that information which might with greater propriety be obtained from the principals.

Though painfully grieved at the dire cause in the murdered man, and the vile turpitude of the Gauntlet family, Charles now rejoiced he had missed meeting his former companion, and felicitated himself on his having escaped imparting his confidence to such a person. Still wretched, however, at the interruption to his corre-

spondence with Geraldine, he devoted, instead of seeking rest, the few hours that intervened till they should sail at three o'clock, in writing to sir Richard and O'Grady. Of the former he inquired why his correspondence with Geraldine, whom he loved with all the tender affection of a friend and brother, should be prohibited, and entreated permission to renew it; of the latter he besought, in case this permission should be refused, to give him of Miss Courteney frequent information.

## CHAPTER V.



No might nor greatness in mortality  
 Can censure 'scape ; back wounding calumny  
 The whitest virtue strikes.                      SHAKESPEARE.

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All the worst  
 Of sorrow's elements in that dark burst  
 Broke o'er his soul, and, with one crash of fate,  
 Laid the whole hopes of his life desolate.      MOORE.

It was the latter end of January, when colonel Clairfait and lieutenant Plunket took their departure from Dublin to join their regiment at Bayonne. Having a swift sailer, and meeting prosperous gales, they soon made the Bay of Biscay ; and landing before the Wellington army crossed the Adour, joined these forces in time to share in the brilliant victory obtained over the duke of Dalmatia, whose troops  
 our

our army soon after dislodged from the advantageous positions which they had obtained on the heights of Orthes, and obliged to retire.

Our hero, stimulated by love with a desire of distinguishing himself, performed almost incredible acts of valour in this engagement and the different rencounters that followed, as our troops pursued the movements of the enemy, and forced them successively to retreat from the different fine posts which the country in every direction presented; yet neither the glad tumult of successful skirmishing, nor the deserved applause to which his dauntless intrepidity entitled him, nor the promotion to which, on this occasion, he was raised, could banish from the perturbed breast of captain Plunket the painful idea that he was neither to hear from nor write to Geraldine.

At Ayre, Charles received a letter from sir Richard Courteney, which, though not granting the indulgence he desired in his  
revived

revived correspondence with his lovely cousin, was consolatory in the highest degree. It contained these remarkable words: —“As to your not being permitted to write to Geraldine, and her not being allowed to answer your letters, it is all lady Courteney’s orders. She says Geraldine is but a mere child, and has got many things to learn, and that her time must be employed on more useful subjects than letter-writing, which, at her age, only fills the mind with profane and worldly thoughts, and turns it aside from religious contemplations. I am glad, however, my dear Charles, you have such a friendship for my daughter; she is a good girl, and deserves to be esteemed; and sure, through me, as there is no use in contending with women, you can hear of her constantly.”

Plunket, trembling to encourage hope, lest it should prove delusive, yet half inclined to draw from this paragraph the most favourable conclusion, took the letter to his friend colonel Clairfait, to have his opinion.

opinion.—“ Nothing can be clearer to me,” said the colonel, as he gave Charles back the letter, “ than that the baronet intends you for his daughter. He may be willing, however, by the agitation of suspense, to keep passion alive, as he wishes no doubt the young lady should be loved with ardour.”

This inference drew a smile from Plunket, who giving way to the delicious hope which this letter and his friend's opinion inspired, felt his spirits ascend, and his heart lighten.

But hope, like the bright flashes of sunshine that occasionally illumine a showery day, is often deceitful: it is, however, wisely lent us by Divine Providence, to gild our prospects through life, and cheer us on our passage; and even when this fails, and that these prospects, clouded by unexpected gloom, give distaste and chagrin to the disappointed spirit, then shall the sublime soul, soaring to higher flights, rest its hope on immortality.

This

This proved precisely the case with our hero, when, smarting under severe wounds received in the conflict with Soult at the taking of Toulouse, and bewailing, in that fatal engagement, with the deep regret due to suffering humanity, this needless effusion of human blood, at a time when hostilities had ceased in consequence of Buonaparte's abdication, he received an angry letter from sir Richard Courteney, accusing him of an intrigue with one of Tomlison's daughters, and reproaching him with base ingratitude to himself and his family, whose honourable society he felt such anxiety to escape, in order, as it appeared, to render a secret visit to these low creatures; but whom he henceforward left him at full liberty to seek, by forbidding all intercourse, personal or by letter, with the inhabitants of the castle.

Charles, though guiltless, yet stabbed to the soul by these severe reproaches, felt at a loss to conceive in what the baronet's charges could have originated, unless his  
precipitate

precipitate expedition in search of Gauntlet might have excited suspicion, or that the accident which confined him at Tomlison's house might have given rise to these injurious reports; his being there, however, he could easily account for, and on this point doctor Acerbus's testimony (whom he was now well pleased to have met at the farmer's) would, he made no doubt, prove his ample vindication.

Unable, however, from an ugly wound in his sword-arm, and another, which, penetrating the helmet, had just gained the head, to enter on a full justification of his conduct, he scrawled, while supported by his servant in bed, a few lines, referring the angry baronet to doctor Acerbus for the cause of his involuntary sojourn at Tomlison's, disclaiming the charge brought against him relative to that man's daughter, and protesting his innocence and devoted attachment to his patron and family.

Condemning his own rash impetuosity (which, prompted by a thirst of fame, and  
an



an impatient desire of signalizing himself, had rendered him the foremost in the attack on Toulouse, and the most eager to cut down the brave men who were now, by their fealty to the Bourbons, no longer the enemies of his country), Plunket was regarding, with the calm philosophic eye of reason, the miseries of war, and deploring its calamitous consequences, when the arrival of this letter added a bitterer pang to his severe reflections, by proving to him the fallaciousness of the secret hope which urged him on—for which he bled himself, and shed the blood of others.

Now, after deluding his charmed senses with this rapturous hope, he was doomed to meet chilling disappointment—after encouraging a tender passion till it became the best part of his existence, and consecrating the finest feelings of his heart to attachment to his patron and his lovely daughter, he was become the mark of obloquy, and destined to lose his interest with these beloved objects, by the tongue  
of

of some vile traducer. Though most acutely feeling this unmerited attack, yet too weak in his present severe indisposition to be roused to indignation, and possessing too great energy of mind to yield weakly to despondence, our hero, more wisely labouring to suppress the irritability which might oppose his perfect cure, rested, with a calm acquiescence equally befitting the Christian hero and rational being, his hopes of justification on Heaven and his own innocence, and looked forward to renovated health and his return to Ireland to disprove this calumnious charge.

His improvement in health, however, though regularly progressive, was tedious; and scarce had his wounded arm regained the same degree of forwardness which it possessed before the irritation produced by his short reply to the baronet's reproachful letter, than another laconic epistle from that gentleman called for a second answer to the following queries:—"Have you not had such a dislike to the castle as to  
say,

*say, that to depart from it would ease your mind, and take a load from your heart scarce supportable? Have you not also advanced, that my marriage with Miss Freelove was a match that reflected no credit on my understanding, and was disrespectful to the memory of the deceased lady Courteney, whose loss you sensibly felt in the complete overthrow of your happiness? Have you not also insinuated, that my wife's devotion was an affectation of extraordinary piety—a mere parade of religion; thus endeavouring to make appear, by such sarcasms, that amiable injured woman a pharisaical hypocrite? And, to sum up all, can you deny not having been for several days a visitor at George Tomlison's, under pretence of a wound which you affirmed to have received in your head, when nothing was amiss with you?"*

Charles, amazed at being charged with such expressions, of which he felt a consciousness he was utterly incapable, in  
vain

vain endeavoured, for the first ten minutes, to recall to mind these words. His gratitude, his filial respect, his tender affection for sir Richard Courteney, made him always mention that gentleman's name with a reverence and honour that extended even to his family; how then could he speak of those in terms of disrespect, or so dislike a spot where all his soul adored concentered?

Revolving in distracting inquietude the subject of this letter, Plunket's thoughts turned at length on a conversation which he had held, previous to his departure from the castle, with doctor Acerbus, and in which his impatience to escape the dangerous attractions of Geraldine had betrayed him into an expression not unlike the first charge in the baronet's letter. This brought fully to his recollection the conversation which followed, and which had been recounted, as he now perceived, in a garbled manner to the credulous baronet, and appeared, under such mutilated statement,

statement, to his disadvantage. Impatient to acquit himself, he resumed once more his pen, and immediately replied to this letter, by admitting in part the charges therein contained, except that attacking the piety of lady Courteney, which he utterly denied; and now no longer at a loss to divine the author of this calumnious attack, he referred sir Richard to doctor Acerbus, to state simply the conversation as it occurred, of which a full and candid detail would, as our hero affirmed, prove his best vindication.

Irritated that the unguarded effusion of his thoughts, which he poured forth in careless confidence, without idea of evil, should be thus ungenerously twisted to the malign purpose of producing disunion between him and his patron, Charles, no longer able to preserve the same degree of moderation in his feelings, and deprived of the prudent counsel of his friend, whose regiment had attended the duke of Wellington to Paris, gave way to an impetuosity

tuosity of temper that brought on a slow fever, and retarded his recovery. When the time arrived that he might expect an answer from sir Richard, his impatience redoubled; no answer, however, was returned; and still lingering under his wounds, and consumed by a slow fever, which preyed on his irritated nerves, some days passed away, leaving him in the most pitiable condition. Without the society or soothing attention of his friend—the gay converse or amusing company of his brother officers, who were all enjoying the splendour and festivity of Paris, poor Plunket was confined to a solitary apartment—had no attendant but his faithful servant, and no visitor but the surgeon.

A prey to tormenting anxiety, and yielding to an impatience to regain Ireland, that counteracted, on his weakened frame, the salutary effects of medicine, Plunket's convalescence was tedious, his perfect recovery even for a time doubtful. Youth and a sound constitution triumphed  
at

at last over disquietude of mind and disease of body, and he became able to walk about his apartment. Yet, though still uneasy at having no reply from sir Richard Courteney, he possessed too great magnanimity of spirit to importune him meanly on the subject, or renew his interdicted correspondence with Miss Courteney, rather leaving it to time and his own further explanation, when an interview should take place, to undeceive the baronet.

Anxious to escape his disquieting thoughts, and look out of himself for amusement, Plunket dispatched his servant to bring him the Irish papers. During the man's absence, a letter that Charles should have got several days before, but which, with the expresses for the regiment, had been forwarded to Paris, was brought him. The superscription was sir Richard's handwriting, and, as if dreading it contained his final doom, he trembled to unfold this letter. It was brief,

VOL. II. G consisting

consisting of only a few cold, formal lines, which possessed nothing of the glow of his former affection, nor even the warmth of his late angry feelings; but merely implied his perfect satisfaction as to the proposed questions, and enclosed him a bill for his quarterly allowance, to which he made some handsome addition, intimating that his law agent had instructions to draw up a deed, giving him a life-annuity for the same sum on his estate, and which deed the agent should present him on his return to Ireland.

Wounded deeper than ever by the cold formality of this letter, from a person whose unremitting kindness had awakened, even in childhood, the tenderest affections of his nature, and the rare virtues of whose heart, as his judgment matured, claimed his esteem and reverence, Charles, though this letter gave also the death-blow to his dearest hopes, felt not more regret in the painful thought, than in that of having unwittingly incurred the displeasure of  
sir



sir Richard—incurred it perhaps beyond recall; for, proud in the consciousness of not having merited from his patron these reproaches, indignant that he should lend an ear to the tongue of his calumniator, and fearful, if he entered on a further vindication of his conduct, he might be taxed with sinister views, he encouraged not a thought of descending to supplicate a return of the baronet's friendship, but snatching up a pen, and following the quick impulse of his irritated feelings, replied to his letter in these terms:—

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*“ To Sir Richard Courteney, Bart.*

*“ Toulouse, July 3, 1814.*

“ That kindness, sir, which has ceased to be a tribute of your esteem and approbation, I shall not receive as an offering of your generosity and compassion; I return, therefore, enclosed, your remittance, of which I have no need—nor of your promised deed of a life-annuity,

which, though truly sensible of your goodness in offering, I must beg leave to decline.

“Indebted to your fostering care for an education befitting a gentleman, and possessing through your bounty the rank of one, I have no further claims on your benevolence, but must owe my future elevation to my own efforts.

“Retaining, however, the most grateful and indelible sense of your past favours, and leaving to time to disprove the calumnies that have been raised against me, I remain, my dear sir, with profound respect, your most obedient servant,

“CHARLES PLUNKET.”

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Scarce had Plunket concluded this letter, and sealed it for the post, than his servant returned with the newspapers. Willing, by occupying his mind, to exclude all disquieting thoughts, he took up an Irish paper; perceiving nothing in the  
the

the first page to fix his attention, he turned to the second, where, as he glanced his eye towards the bottom, a paragraph, containing the elopement of Miss C——, of the neighbourhood of ———, with major B——, of ——— regiment, particularly struck him. His heart trembled with jealous doubt, as his indignant eye swallowed this intelligence, and he felt ready to fill up the blanks with the letters he most dreaded.

“Miss C——,” said the paper, “on being missed, was immediately pursued; but so rapid was the flight of the lovers, that before her friends came up on the pursuit, they had gained Scotland, and were married.”

With a heart burning with jealous rage, and bursting with indignant fury—with a mind harassed with painful doubt, and a prey to torturing anxiety, Plunket had read thus far, still unwilling to identify the odious statement with the amiable Geraldine, yet scarce able to conceive it

could be any other. However, as the next paragraph caught his frenzied eye, it put the fatal truth beyond all question. —“ The young lady, independent of her being extremely lovely and accomplished, is heiress to a large estate, in right of her deceased mother; and between her and the paternal inheritance there stands no heir but a sickly boy, who will scarce attain maturity.”

With this clear and expressive sentence such full conviction rushed on the distracted mind of Plunket, as left him not a shadow of doubt to hang a slender hope on. Sir Richard's displeasure had indeed given the first blow to these cherished hopes, and wounded him most severely, yet, as he knew his candid honourable nature rendered him open to conviction, he expected he would at last see his injustice, and be the first to make reparation; but that Geraldine, the idolized Geraldine, in whom he imagined every perfection of human nature centered, and whose frank confidence

confidence and tenderness of manner towards himself gave him reason to encourage the pleasing hope he was not indifferent to her, should so far forget the native dignity and purity of the sex as to disgrace herself by an elopement, and disappoint his tender wishes by her sudden attachment to another, proved to him matter of cruel and agonizing thought, torturing him to distraction. Contempt for her want of proper discernment in this choice, and indignation at her indiscretion, struggled with the tenderness of his soul, and held a painful conflict; pride also came to his aid, and resolutely determined him to expel the giddy fair one's image from his breast for ever.

With that view, instead of proceeding to Ireland, as was his first intention, Plunket hastened, though far from being sufficiently recovered to undertake such journey, to join his regiment at Paris, in hopes, amidst the present gaieties of that crowded city, to lose all recollection of a woman;

the volatility of whose conduct, he now became convinced, would, in case of a union with her, have opposed an insuperable barrier to all domestic felicity.

Soothed by the sympathy of his kind friend colonel Clairfait, amused at his good-natured efforts to entertain him, and confirmed by the force of this gentleman's reasoning in his prudent resolution to subdue his passion, Plunket regained in a short time his health and composure. And here, in the society of a few chosen friends, and in examining the various productions of the fine arts which the admirable genius of Bonaparte had, during his short reign, introduced into his palaces and the public edifices, he might have enjoyed the delights of convivial intercourse and the sweets of peace, were it not for the jealous and invidious eye with which the English officers were regarded by the natives; but the blood would frequently boil in his veins, and the rushing current swell from his heart to his flushed cheek, at a contemptuous

temptuous glance of the eye directed to a countryman, or an ambiguous word levelled at England, which, though not immediately his country, he considered as such; yet a moment of cool reflection taught him to pity rather than resent the high national spirit, which felt justly indignant of a foreign armed force in their capital, swaying by intimidation their political measures, and directing their councils. Plunket was always ready to make allowances for the embittered feelings these humiliating circumstances produced, and by conciliation appease, rather than irritate the proud, though wounded spirit.

CHAPTER VI.  
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Let wit her sails, her oars let wisdom lend,  
The helm let politic experience guide;  
Yet cease to hope thy short-liv'd bark shall ride  
Down spreading fate's unnavigable tide.  
What though still it farther tend?  
Still 'tis farther from the end,  
And in the bosom of that boundless sea  
Still finds its error lengthen with its way.      PRIOR.

WITH a feverish impatience that excluded all thoughts of rest, and rendered her insensible of fatigue, Fanny O'Grady pursued the fugitive Geraldine. Travelling for two days and nights without rest or intermission, unless to change horses, she gained on the lovers at every post, and to the last encouraged the hope that she might come up with them, before they would sail for Scotland. They had, however, sailed an hour before she reached the port,



port, and by that time had more than half crossed the Channel; but the wind was still full in her favour, and procuring a light vessel without delay, she pursued them almost immediately.

On landing, O'Grady, still fated to meet vexatious disappointment, was informed the votaries of Hymen delayed not here, but had proceeded direct to a village some miles up the country to solemnize their nuptials. She prepared to follow, but no chaise, through the successful manœuvring of major Blandford, who apprehended a pursuit, and took this means to interrupt it, could here be procured; and the wretched Fanny, for a moment overcome by disappointment and oppressed with fatigue, felt ready to yield to despair, and relinquish all hope of regaining Geraldine.

This intrepid woman, however, possessed an unconquerable energy of mind, that gathered strength from opposition, and rose in resolution, as difficulties increased, to withstand their encounter.—

When unable to procure a chaise, she mounted a swift horse, and leading herself the way, pursued the lovers with incredible speed, whipping at every instant, as she approached the town, the flagging animal into increased expedition. Leaving her attendants far behind, she gained the village before them, and as she galloped to the inn-door, and flung herself from the foaming steed, appeared, by the complete derangement of her dress, disordered, and all covered with dust—the agitation of her countenance, languid from excessive fatigue, yet glowing from over-exertion—and the trembling impatience of her whole manner—more like a wild maniac escaped the strait waistcoat of her keeper, than a rational being.

Of no avail, however, was this speed, and useless all poor O'Grady's exertions—the fatal ceremony, which sealed the destiny of the giddy Geraldine, and blasted the fond expectations of the noble Plunket, was just over as she entered; and,  
struck

struck to the heart at this cruel disappointment, with the wretched woman's last hope fled the slender remnant of her exhausted strength, and she sunk lifeless, at the feet of the new-made bride, on the floor.

Geraldine (whose spirits were in a continual flutter of agitation from the time of leaving her father's house, and who, half-repentant of her giddy flight, encouraged, to the last moment, a hope that she might be overtaken) had gone through the marriage ceremony with the indifference of a person who, conscious of having acted wrong, and perceiving no means of retreat, becomes heedless of the consequence. The entrance of her beloved Fanny called up a glow of pleasure, mingled with the flush of self-reproaching shame, on her countenance, and she was turning to embrace her, when she beheld her prostrate at her feet. Alarmed at her sudden indisposition, Geraldine stooped hastily to raise her; but how great was her shock  
on

on beholding the changed countenance of Fanny, from whence the animation of passion and the warmth of exercise had now totally disappeared, and given place to the deep havoc caused by grief and anxiety, by fatigue and loss of rest—which havoc spreading over her sunk, ghastly, and languid features, gave to the fainting woman every appearance of a lifeless corse !

The distracted Geraldine, struck with horror at the piteous sight, and supposing her tender maternal friend quite dead, threw herself, in a frenzy of grief and despair, on the floor, over the inanimate O'Grady, and bewailed with tears and pathetic lamentations her untimely death, accusing her own imprudent flight as the cause; while major Blandford, secretly rejoicing that the marriage ceremony was performed before this interruption; and possessing greater freedom and composure of thought than his distracted bride, rang the bell for assistance.

By:

By the timely aid of the mistress of the inn Fanny was restored to sensation, and the weeping Geraldine relieved in part from her first fears and agonizing sorrow. Still trembling, however, for the faithful woman's life, she supported her in her arms, which she had thrown in tender affection round her, and, seated on the floor, reclined the still-unconscious Fanny's languid head on her bosom. O'Grady felt, as she revived, Geraldine's tears wet her cheek, and the gentle pressure of her arms; when indignation, supplying the defect of strength, gave a momentary glow to her countenance, as, with all the energy of warm and passionate feelings, she burst from her embrace, exclaiming—"Let me go, cruel girl! of what avail now all this seeming tenderness, when you have broken my heart by your deception?"

The effort was too much for poor Fanny's strength; she reeled, and would again have sunk on the floor, if the hostess had not received and supported her to a chair,  
on

on which she reclined in silent despondence, destitute of all stimulus to rouse from complete extinction expiring nature, but the warmth of anger and the energy of despair; while, prostrate at her feet, and embracing her knees, the fair Geraldine wept, in all the desolation of unfeigned sorrow, her imprudent conduct, and deprecated her friend's just anger.

"Leave me, deceitful young lady!" cried the deeply-wounded and indignant woman, as, with a strong expression of resentful anguish, she turned away her head from Geraldine—"leave me: go to the lover for whom you have deceived long-tried friends, and abandoned your father; go, and leave me to my disappointment and sorrow."

"No, no," cried the weeping suppliant, clinging in a still closer embrace to O'Grady's knees; "here kneeling, my beloved Fanny, shall I remain, till you forgive and take me to your arms."

"Inhuman creature!" exclaimed O'Grady,

dy, with bitterness, and repelling Geraldine with her uplifted hand, “are you not satisfied that the work of destruction is begun, by your imprudent conduct, on her who lived but for you—do you desire to behold its consummation? Do you wish to kill me?”

Geraldine replied not, but sobbing aloud, hid her face in Fanny’s lap, who thus proceeded:—“In infancy you reposed on my bosom, and were fostered at my heart; and, oh! how did you, by a thousand infantine graces, entwine yourself into that doting heart, till it clung to you, in mistaken confidence, with all the tenderness of the most fond mother! From that time to our fatal separation, you had been the constant object of my tenderest care, the idol of my warmest affection—your happiness the subject of my thoughts by day, and prayers by night—your perfection my perpetual boast, my pride, and glory. On your truth I relied, in your candour I confided; yet, for a person whom you knew  
little

little more than a few short weeks, you have disappointed and deceived me, tarnished by inexcusable indiscretion your own fair fame, and surrendered to the calumnious sneer of the envious, who before sickened at your former worth, your name for a jest, and your honour to be scoffed at. You have broken my heart; and, if to witness my sufferings do not rejoice you, go, leave me to die in peace—leave me to my sorrow.”

At each cutting reproach Geraldine's tears streamed afresh, and deep convulsive sobs issued from her heaving bosom, as, still on her knees in earnest supplication, she clung to the exasperated Fanny; while major Blandford, irritated at these reproaches from a person whom he considered nothing more than a domestic, reproved his bride for the meanness of such unbecoming supplications, as he attempted to raise her from her prostrate condition.

“Leave me to myself, sir,” said Geraldine, repelling with vehemence his offered assistance,



assistance, "for you have rendered me miserable for life, by betraying me into an imprudence I can never cease to regret."

"Can it be possible," inquired the astonished Blandford, "that my tender assiduities are thus rejected for the solace of a menial? You forget, Geraldine, that you are my wife, and consider not how you disgrace my name by these mean supplications."

"I can never, sir, esteem any supplication mean that may soften the just indignation of this dear affectionate woman, who has long supplied to me the place of mother, and whose tender heart I have inhumanly stabbed by my imprudent conduct."

"As my wife, however," replied he, haughtily, "it may be necessary, madam, that you account to me for a meanness disgraceful to my name and honourable profession."

"The man," cried Fanny O'Grady, rising

rising in her chair, and measuring with an indignant glance of her eagle eye the proud major from head to foot, "who possessed the base art to seduce an innocent child from her duty to a tender father, may well be supposed to exercise over that deluded child the tyrant husband; you might therefore, sir, have spared this proof.—But you, unfortunate girl," she continued, while the fire, which, the moment before, emanated in angry flashes from her full eyes, was now quenched in tears of tender compassion, as their softened beam rested on the kneeling Geraldine, "I forgive, because I pity you. With a heart sensible as yours, you can know no peace after this alienation from your duty. God grant that he who seduced you to err, may not prove your first chastiser! Come, dear mistaken child, to my heart; it cannot remain invulnerable to your tears—it yearns to embrace you."

The hostess had withdrawn on Mrs. O'Grady's recovery, and major Blandford, transported

transported with rage at beholding himself entirely neglected of his bride (who was now weeping her deviation from filial duty on the bosom of her faithful Fanny), indignantly retired from the apartment. A moment's reflection, however, convinced him it would be highly imprudent on his part to irritate the impetuous O'Grady, who, exasperated at his haughty conduct, might employ her influence over Geraldine, which he could not but perceive was unbounded, to bring about a separation, and disappoint, before their completion, his avaricious views on the young lady's fortune; on the contrary, he clearly saw that by conciliation he might not only appease this faithful woman's anger, but gain her for a warm advocate with sir Richard.

With this view then he re-entered the parlour, and by the tenderness of his manner to Geraldine, and the graciousness of his address to Fanny, sought to repair his late hasty expressions, and alleviate the  
tender

tender sorrow of both ladies, whom he still found weeping in each other's arms. Without betraying any disapprobation but such as the tender jealousy of a lover might excuse, he gently reproached his bride for throwing a gloom by her tears over the happiest day of his life; he entreated she would lose all regret for the past in the delightful prospect of happiness which their mutual love promised, and by her smiles convince him she shared the bliss she had conferred upon her happy husband in their union. He then besought the friendship of Mrs. O'Grady, whom, as a person of intrinsic worth, and so tenderly regarded by his beloved Geraldine, he felt solicitous to make his friend; and expressed his hopes that her interest would not be wanting to reconcile sir Richard Courteney to their marriage, which was now all that remained to complete their felicity.

Fanny, quick in all her feelings, and whose temper was warm and indignant, was easily roused to anger, that blazed at  
opposition,

opposition, but which a mild word would as instantly subdue; incensed, therefore, as she was at Geraldine's having deceived her, and wrung through every pore of her tender heart for Plunket's disappointment, yet, when she beheld her tears, when she saw her repel Blandford's assiduities, and heard her reproach him, resentment gave way to pity and renewed affection—her heart softened in her favour, and, no longer able to resist her supplications, she took her to her bosom, in forgiving kindness and restored endearment. But though anger was thus subdued, her sorrow flowed with redoubled violence, and she wept over the new-made bride, the defeat of her own long-cherished hopes, and the complete wreck of all Plunket's promised happiness: that happiness, in which her own was comprised, and with which for years she had been cheating her deluded fancy, was now flown for ever; and while one of the dear objects of her tenderest regard

regard was condemned to prove all the bitterness of despair, the other scarce dared to promise herself, in this unhallowed union, a precarious felicity. Irremediable, however, Fanny now saw, was the evil; and as the art of others (as she clearly perceived from Geraldine's explanation) had equally contributed with the volatility of her own nature to betray the thoughtless girl into this precipitate union, she considered her as much an object of pity as condemnation; and while her indignation turned on others, the weeping bride shared with the deserted Plunket every tender and compassionate feeling.

When major Blandford returned, Fanny, overpowered with sorrow and a prey to despair, possessed no longer the same energy of passion; she received, therefore, with silent passiveness, his offers of conciliation, and gave no opposition to his polite attention to herself, unless when her piercing genius, penetrating the secret

cret cause of these overstrained civilities, would, in a contemptuous glance of the keen eye, mark her consciousness.

The excessive debility and indisposition of Fanny obliged the newly-wedded pair, notwithstanding their impatience to return, to remain at the inn for the rest of the day and the night succeeding, in order, by necessary repose, to procure her strength to resume her journey. On the following morning, however, the united parties sailed out with the tide, and crossed the Channel to Donaghadee in a few hours; from thence they proceeded, by regular and easy stages, to Dublin, which they gained on the evening of the second day, where it was determined the wedded pair should in secret for the present remain, lest the baronet should meditate against Blandford any prosecution; while the indefatigable O'Grady, with a penitent letter from Geraldine to her father, should proceed to Dermont Castle, to pacify sir Richard's

just indignation, and implore for the fugitives returning favour.

Geraldine, who, from the moment the irrevocable knot was tied, had not ceased to bewail her cruel desertion of an affectionate parent and this inauspicious union, saw Fanny, on whose tenderness alone she now relied for support, depart, with a reluctance which nothing but her anxious solicitude to be reconciled to her father could overcome; and, insensible to all the transports of love, or the adoration of her husband, retired, in the solitude of her chamber, to weep her irretrievable error—mingle with her tears a prayer for the success of her friend, on the event of whose application hung her future happiness; and, avoiding all society, there consume, in trembling impatience and doubtful hope, the tedious interval till her return.

Now left in the meantime, on her solitary journey, to her own saddening thoughts,



thoughts, memory, too retentive for tranquillity, in its recollection carried Fanny's reflections back to the happy days of Charles and Geraldine's infancy, when the presence of her dear, but now deceased lady, threw a brightening gleam of happiness over their way, and cheered every passing scene. She recollected, with poignant regret, how that amiable lady's views all centered in the mutual happiness of these dear children, which happiness she had, even on her deathbed, endeavoured to secure, so far as human prudence could foresee, by obtaining sir Richard's consent to, and sacred promise to see performed, their union. It had likewise been, for the last nine years, the constant occupation of her secret thoughts to bring about this union, as much out of tender respect to the memory of the deceased lady, as from lively affection to the youthful survivors. Yet, through an unlooked-for fatality, designed, as it would seem, by an overruling Providence, to prove the futility of all

human projects, she is separated from Geraldine, and by an unavoidable necessity, in the indisposition and death of her mother, at the only period when her presence was most essential to that young lady; and in an absence of little more than a week—so uncertain in their accomplishment are the designs of man—the labour of years is destroyed, the temple, which she had been industriously raising in her pupil's bosom to tender friendship and pure affection for Plunket, is overturned in a moment by the freaks of the fancy, and she is left herself, in all the bitterness of disappointment, to deplore the inutility of her work.

Fanny's great sensibility of heart and fervid disposition tended to render her pious, and inflame her with a holy zeal; but, possessed of clear intellects and a strong mind, her piety was in nowise tinctured with fanaticism; yet, on the present occasion, when she saw chance, instead of aiding her long-meditated design,

sign, oppose it, she felt half inclined to become a convert to lady Courteney's doctrine, *that there was a destiny in all things, which to resist would be useless and impossible.* Her understanding, however, was of too superior a cast to dwell long on such absurdity; there was no doubt, she knew, a destiny in all things, but regulated by a wise Providence, which, leaving to man his free will, gives him to choose between good and evil; yet so orders it, as from the result of this choice should flow his reward or punishment; endowing, no doubt, some privileged few with such clear perception of both good and evil as to derive advantage from the mistakes of others, while these last, often incorrigible in error, are scarcely benefited by their own.

Fanny O'Grady, however, was not of that incorrigible nature—she could rightly discern between good and evil; and while the former obtained the homage of her respect and adoration, the latter excited

only distrust and detestation; neither was she unpractised in that divine lesson which teaches us to derive good from evil, and to correct our own faults by other people's mischances. She now saw clearly that Geraldine's imprudence originated in the young lady's defective education, to which wrong education her own natural impetuosity had perhaps as much contributed as the want of proper principles in the present lady Courteney. The latter had certainly given an untoward bias to her daughter's mind, and inspired her with false notions of religion; but the former, even while she laboured to correct these principles, had not taught her by her own example, whose effect is more prevalent than precept, the dominion of reason, and the control of the passions; on the contrary, she had not only strengthened these last by the warmth of her own temper, but weakened in her youthful charge the sense of filial duty, by always scanning with too exact scrupulosity the faults of lady

lady Courteney. Virtue and intelligence are not only essential in a preceptor, but a mild dispassionate temper, which, giving him a habitual control over his own feelings, shall enable him to restrain those of his pupil. Mrs. O'Grady felt her conscious defect of this essential quality, and deplored it with great sincerity; it rendered her more indulgent to the imprudent conduct of Geraldine, whom she was now anxious to behold reconciled to her father, and as happy in her new engagement as possible; but for the completion of this happiness, and that of the disappointed and neglected Plunket, she now, despising human agency, only looked to Divine Providence, to whose protecting care she did not cease to recommend them.

It was past noon, on the second day after her departure from Dublin, when Fanny arrived at the castle. Determined, with a keen judicious policy, that proved her perfect knowledge of him whom she had to contend with, to take the baronet

by surprise, Fanny had forborne to give him any previous intimation of Geraldine's marriage till she should herself arrive—not without a hope that the anxiety produced by suspense, while ignorant of his daughter's situation, would soften his heart to parental love, and dispose his mind in her favour. She was well acquainted with the gentle, unresisting, good-natured disposition of the baronet, and from hence had drawn with nice discrimination her conclusions; but, void of all art in herself, and unpractised in every species of deceit, she was not aware of the great lengths to which these odious qualities might urge another, and of course did not expect to meet the opposition with which sir Richard, under the influence of lady Courteney's advice and suggestion, was prepared to resist the tender pleadings of nature in his own kind heart and her warm solicitations.

CHAP.

## CHAPTER VII.



No ceremony that to greatness belongs,  
 Not the king's crown, nor the deputed sword,  
 The marshal's truncheon, nor the judge's robe,  
 Become them with one half so good a grace  
 As mercy does.

.....

Mercy is not itself that oft looks so ;  
 Pardon is still the nurse of second woe.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE undisguised abhorrence with which Charles Plunket received the news of lady Courteney's marriage; on the morning it was first announced, passed not unnoticed of that lady—it rooted deep in her heart an aversion for him equal to what he at that moment felt for this hated marriage; in him, however, this passion was nothing more than a sudden, transient, and evanescent impulse of the indignant feelings,

roused at what he considered an insult to the sacred memory of the dead—in her it was the continual working of a lasting, perseverant, and implacable spirit, gaining strength with time; still festering at every proof of his worth, and not to be appeased but by his misery or destruction.

To this deep-rooted aversion in the offended lady we must attribute Charles's early separation from the family of his patron, and his being put into the army. Lady Courteney was well acquainted with sir Richard's promise to her predecessor, and his full determination, in consequence of that promise, of uniting the hands of Charles Plunket and Geraldine; this union would bring an accession of wealth, rank, and independence to the young gentleman, that but to think on excited her chagrin and displeasure, and which, in her vindictive spirit towards him, she was determined, by every malevolent exertion in her power, to frustrate; hence her cavilling at the correspondence of these young people,



people, till she obliged Geraldine to drop it; and hence her observant attention of major Blandford's assiduities to that young lady on the night of the ball, whose visits she decided to encourage, in the hope that his gallantries might become pleasing to Miss Courteney, and efface from her youthful mind all impression of the absent Plunket.

In the indisposition which followed lady Courteney's alarm at the sound of the mysterious voice, she was visited the following morning by doctor Acerbus. This visit at the castle brought fresh to the doctor's recollection his having accidentally met Plunket at George Tomlison's, and unable to account for his visit there, he mentioned the circumstance to sir Richard and lady Courteney, not indeed with any view of obtaining elucidation, but with such comments and observations as rendered our hero's motive for such visit to them even still more inexplicable.

The baronet, who imagined he knew

every thought of Plunket's heart, was confounded at this intelligence, and at a loss to account for such visit; and the doctor, who owed our hero a grudge, since he declined interfering with major Thunder to have the soldier punished who had not only deceived but jeered him, sought by distant hints to throw a new light on the matter, to which light lady Courteney gave additional brightness by instantly adding—"Don't you remember, my dear sir Richard, how I observed that Charles nurtured some secret passion? It is more than probable, from this stolen visit, I was not out in my conjecture."

"Your ladyship was perfectly right," observed the doctor; "it was certainly passion, or a secret inclination for some person, that rendered lieutenant Plunket, when last here, so impatient to quit the castle. I was surprised indeed he could so far forget the kindness with which, when friendless and an orphan, he here found shelter, as to betray such dislike to  
the

the place, and such impatience to leave it."

"Why what did he say of the place?" inquired the baronet. "It is a good strong castle, and accustomed to give to friends now, as to foes heretofore, a *warm* reception."

"I should be sorry, for the credit of human nature," rejoined the doctor, "to suppose lieutenant Plunket ungrateful: yet gratitude, my dear sir, is a rare quality on earth, unknown at least to the rising generation." And here the physician, indignant at the complete extinction of this rare quality in the present race, recapitulated, in such colours and portions as were most likely to please the lady, and rouse the attention of the baronet, his former recorded conversation with lieutenant Plunket, which recapitulation produced sir Richard's first angry letter to that gentleman.

Lady Courteney, elate with conscious pride at this indubitable proof of her just  
discernment

discernment and acute penetration, resolved to sift the motive of Plunket's visit at Tomlison's to the bottom, and with that self-complaisant view engaged doctor Acerbus to render to this family a visit of friendly inquiry, to which, in the secret wish of *particular* as well as general information with which some curious geniuses are inspired, he had, on his own part, no objection.

Miss Juliette Tomlison, spiritless and dejected, appeared to our medical gentleman a prey to languishing hope, and devoured by a secret passion. The faint and languid smile (in default of a crimson blush, which could not force its way through the sallow cheek) called up by the doctor's too close interrogatories relative to Plunket, convinced him that our hero alone was the object of her passion; and her confused replies, with the insinuations to which she was urged by mortified pride and self-love, gave him reason to suppose that her affections were ob-  
tained

tained only by the lover's long and persevering assiduities.

Of this information an invidious use was soon made to impress on sir Richard Courteney's mind the little regard in which Charles Plunket held his daughter; and the injustice it would prove to that amiable and lovely young lady to bestow her hand on a person so insensible of her beauty and merit. Lady Courteney possessed on this occasion such extraordinary delicacy (and which she also strongly recommended to the observance of sir Richard) as to be solicitous to preserve the young lady from the mortification of knowing herself so much neglected; or perhaps she was prudently disposed to silence on the affair, through apprehension that from Geraldine Fanny O'Grady would learn the circumstance of this stolen visit to George Tomlinson's, and she might, in turn, give intimation of its being known at the castle to Plunket, who, governed by selfish views, would not fail to change his

his conduct, and pretend a passion for the amiable girl which he felt not, and of which sordid artifice she might become the wretched victim. It was a more prudent plan, her ladyship considered, to remain entirely silent on the intended union, and wean her daughter's regard from Plunket by directing it to another object; and Fate, the deity to which lady Courteney paid homage, seemed ready in this instance to second her views. Major Blandford appeared at the time most opportunely: how he succeeded with the inconsiderate Geraldine, and to the destruction of Plunket's best hopes, have been already related; how lady Courteney laboured in her turn to defeat his, is now to be considered.

"You see, sir Richard," said lady Courteney, after Fanny had departed in pursuit of Geraldine, "the fatal consequence, in this indiscreet step of Miss Courteney, of the independent principles inculcated on her youthful mind by that O'Grady.

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The young lady *indeed* should learn to think for herself—to have opinions of her own, and to decide exclusively, without her *prudent* governess allowing her to take into consideration that *perfect submission is the only quality necessary in a young person*. The consequence has been, that, in Geraldine's elevated notions of her own correct principles, she lost all sense of filial duty, all respect for parents, all docility to their will, or regard for their opinions. So much, sir, for O'Grady's tuition !”

“ Why, lady Courteney, condemn poor O'Grady for Geraldine's imprudence ? She was absent, and is less accountable for my daughter's elopement than your ladyship, who was on the spot, and yet could neither foresee nor prevent it.”

“ Certainly not, sir Richard,” replied his lady, with unruffled calmness, and assuming an air of great impartiality ; “ without suspicion of deceit in Geraldine, I was unprepared to meet such disaster. But, unhappy girl ! it is herself whom she has deceived—

ceived—it is herself who will, in the end, most bitterly feel the sad effects of her disobedience. Her flight has given a deep wound to our peace now, but the partner of that flight will give a still deeper wound to her own peace hereafter; for, foolishly imagining she is adored by major Blandford, she has committed her happiness in wedded life to a man who loves only himself, and who, all lovely and amiable as our Geraldine truly is, marries her only for the noble fortune to which she will be entitled, and which may so largely contribute to his selfish pleasures; nay, I question, sir Richard, if, relying on your easy good-nature, he does not look to immediate possession of the Plunket estate.”

“He shall be disappointed, however,” interrupted the baronet, hastily. “If he does not prove the sincerity of his affection for my daughter, he shall not touch, so long as I can prevent him, a guinea of her fortune.”

“That is the very last thing major  
Blandford



Blandford looks to, and it is the only proof by which you can try the sincerity of his affection. His love for your daughter is idolatry of her fortune, which he values, because it can procure him these sensual gratifications he delights in; and not supposing you, sir Richard, possessed of great strength of mind or firmness of resolution—and perceiving also the softness of your nature and tenderness of your heart, with your too indulgent affection for your only daughter—he imagines a few tears from Geraldine will subdue your indignation, and that——”

“I will disregard her tears,” interrupted sir Richard, impatiently—“the ungrateful girl, that could abandon her tender father for such a designing fellow! and disappoint his sordid views, as I am a man, lady Courteney.”

“She will hang weeping round you, kneel imploringly at your feet, and cling to your knees for pardon,” rejoined lady Courteney; “and though it was only last night

night she deserted you for a sordid fellow, whom she knew little more than a month, she will persuade you, sir Richard, kind soft man that you are, that she never ceased to love her father."

"Persuade me! Do you think, lady Courteney, I am such a blockhead? do you think they can make such a fool of me?"

"I should be sorry to think so meanly of your understanding, sir Richard; yet that they fancy you will be this easy fool, ready to forgive, and of consequence willing to endow them with the Plunkét estate, I cannot question."

"I wish they dared to make the trial, till you should see how I would serve them."

"Never fear; they will soon try the strength of your resolution, sir Richard. Application will be speedily made you, and that through O'Grady, to pardon your daughter's wilful disobedience by the investiture of her fortune. The pardon,  
after

after such premeditated offence, would not be once thought of, but that the fortune of course will follow."

"What pleasure I shall have in disappointing them!" said sir Richard, with a forced smile of exultation.

"It can be no pleasure to an affectionate parent, sir Richard, to treat a beloved child harshly; but it is a duty you owe yourself, to act with such firm and steady demeanour as to render your name respectable, and not make of it a proverb through the country, by the exercise of a soft good-nature, that would lay you open to continual imposition. I am so far interested for the credit of your understanding; as to hope you will resist with proper spirit their application; it will be putting major Blandford to a trial he was not prepared to expect; it will also be proving the disinterestedness of his love for your daughter."

By observations such as these, dropped at occasional intervals, did lady Courteney inflame

inflammé sir Richard's indignation against his daughter, and strengthen his determination not to pardon or receive the fugitives. As the time approached in which their return might be expected, these observations were insidiously renewed and multiplied, to the no small prejudice of the cause Fanny came to advocate, and the interest of Geraldine. The kind-hearted baronet was not, however, exempt from painful anxiety during O'Grady's absence, which urged him frequently to express a wish for her safe and speedy return, and that with an impatience and solicitude that hurt the feelings and disconcerted the projects of his wife, to whose tender reproaches on these occasions he would reply, that all his impatience concerning the fugitives was only to have an opportunity to prove to her ladyship his just anger and indignation at his daughter's rebellious conduct, and the steadiness he was capable of manifesting on their application.

O'Grady

O'Grady at length arrived; and the deep despondence which hung on the dejected countenance of the baronet at seeing her, alone, proved she was not the only person he had expected. In a tone of tremulous tenderness, which gave birth to rising hope in Fanny's heart, and created sudden and jealous alarm in lady Courteney's breast, he inquired for Geraldine. Fanny replied to his inquiries, that Geraldine, deeply repentant of her undesigned and unfortunate desertion of so good a father, could know neither peace nor happiness till restored to his favour. "But here is her letter; in it you will discover the sentiments of a truly contrite heart for an involuntary offence—in it she speaks for herself, sir."

"Is Geraldine married?—is she my daughter, or the wife of major Blandford?" demanded the baronet, impatiently, and hesitating, till her reply, to take the letter.

"She is still your tender, your affectionate daughter—still, by her filial love, entitled

entitled to your regard; and more than ever, by the sincerity of her regret at displeasing you, deserving of your compassion—though the wife of major Blandford.”

“ The wife of major Blandford !” exclaimed the enraged baronet, stamping on the floor, “ and dare address me ! Hell and fury !” he continued, tearing the letter to pieces, “ if that be the case, why do you speak to me of the ungrateful girl, Fanny ? No, I never will forgive her—never see her face more ; tell her that, from her offended and enraged father. At my death, indeed, she may enjoy her mother’s fortune, but my blessing never. This to be sure the disobedient creature thinks nothing of, but will look forward to my death with pleasure for the fortune. What a grievance ! what a curse that I should ever have had a daughter !”

In this manner did the incensed father, foaming with anger, and striding in his fury from one end of the apartment to  
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the other, give vent for several minutes to his swelled feelings; while lady Courteney, carefully observing the ebullition of his rage, and Fanny, waiting till it should in a small degree subside, sat in painful suspense and trembling impatience.

“Your daughter’s imprudent conduct has no doubt given, sir Richard,” said the latter, “a deep wound to your paternal heart, and justly excited your indignation; but, reprehensible as that conduct may appear, it admits of some extenuation; and that her imprudence has not been voluntary, will prove her excuse and your consolation.”

“Not voluntary, O’Grady!” exclaimed lady Courteney. “What but her own perverse inclination could have urged Geraldine to such indiscretion?”

“A combination of circumstances, my lady, each trivial no doubt, but which, operating in conjunction on her feelings in a state of irritation, urged her to this precipitate step; but of which she so immediately

mediately repented, that if timely pursued she would never have become the wife of major Blandford."

"*Very likely indeed!*" interjected lady Courteney, with an incredulous smile.

"I knew that, lady Courteney; yet you would not let me pursue them," cried the baronet, impatiently.

"I neither then nor now, sir Richard," subjoined the lady, glancing with an air of tender solicitude at her husband, "was willing you should forget what is due to yourself, by proving to the world you are not wholly destitute of intellect—not the *soft gull* major Blandford and Mrs. Blandford would suppose you; but which you would certainly make yourself appear, by meeting, more than half way on the ground of conciliation, a disobedient child, who is entitled to no such indulgence from an injured and offended father."

"If your ladyship and sir Richard would but permit me," said Fanny, mildly, "to enter on a detail of the circumstances  
which



which led to Miss Courteney's elopement, they might serve as some mitigation of her indiscretion; and it would prove to you both some satisfaction that she did not err deliberately."

"She has erred, however," replied lady Courteney, "beyond forgiveness for the present; and it is not now necessary that our feelings should be lacerated afresh by a detail of the disagreeable circumstance."

"If it be true," rejoined Fanny, "as I have often heard your ladyship affirm, that we are not accountable for deeds to which we are impelled by an inevitable necessity, would it not be injustice to punish Geraldine for a rash act, to which conspiring circumstances urged her?"

"That is indeed a question," said the baronet, "which gives a point in Geraldine's favour."

Lady Courteney felt embarrassed, but after the pause of a moment she resumed, with her usual composure—"Those certainly, who are advanced in grace, and

acting under the divine impulse, cannot be accountable for their actions; but a young person, not come to proper understanding—not born perhaps to the new life of grace, and having her parents to direct her, is very culpable, when she acts without their advice or permission.”

“All that is very true, lady Courteney; and I give you credit for such nice distinction,” said the baronet.

“At that age, sir Richard,” resumed the lady, “meek submission to the will of those whom God has, as his representatives, placed over them, and implicit obedience to their commands, is all the perfection that is required of young people, till, by this perfect obedience in themselves, they learn in time to govern others; but *poor* Geraldine, a disobedient and unfeeling daughter, gives earnest that she will prove, if not corrected now by your persevering adherence to your present resolution, a weak, foolish, and imprudent mother.”

“Disobedient,

“ Disobedient, lady Courteney, Geraldine has unfortunately proved ; but, pardon me, not unfeeling,” exclaimed Fanny O’Grady. “ Might not, on the contrary, feelings too acute, deeply lacerated perhaps by unjust and ungenerous suspicion, have wrought up the inconsiderate girl to this imprudent act ?”

“ Her after-conduct,” interrupted lady Courteney, “ clearly proved and fully justified all former suspicions.”

“ Yet if I could prove,” rejoined Fanny, impressively, “ that your ladyship’s suspicion was not the *effect* of Geraldine’s imprudent conduct, but the absolute *cause*—not the *object* awakened to alarm by her prior indiscretion, but the *agent* that, through feelings embittered by a sense of injury, excited to this indiscretion—should it not have due weight on the unprejudiced mind of a parent not predisposed to condemn?—should it not incline him to lend a willing ear, when a penitent child

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supplicates

supplicates pardon for an error that was neither deliberate nor voluntary?"

"You may speak if you will, Fanny," said sir Richard—"you may say all you can to excuse Geraldine; but I will not forgive her—I will not see her or her husband; that's the whole of the matter."

"You see, O'Grady," subjoined lady Courteney, willing to prevent, on Fanny's part, any reference to the past, any recapitulation of the causes of her ladyship's injurious suspicion, "all details are now unnecessary. Sir Richard feels justly indignant at his daughter's undutiful conduct and cruel desertion of affectionate parents, and is determined to resent it with becoming spirit; that person could not be his friend that would recommend him to act otherwise, as lenity now, after such a recent act of wilful disobedience, would prove a weakness that might justly bring his understanding into question: parental authority is indeed truly contemptible,

temptible, when it becomes impotent to punish."

"Very true, lady Courteney; a father, in that case, is a mere cypher. But I will prove my authority, and make it be respected."

"But is not mercy, sir Richard," questioned Fanny, "the peculiar attribute of Heaven—mercy, that divine quality, by which we bear the strongest affinity to our Heavenly Father, whom we daily offend, but of whom our repentance propitiates returning grace and favour? Can it then prove derogatory to human understanding to resemble the Omnipotent in that glorious attribute to which a lost world owes its redemption?"

"Why certainly not, Fanny," replied sir Richard. "But punishments, you know, are necessary, or all the wise legislators of former ages, and of different kingdoms, would not have decreed them."

"And have they not also decreed that

mercy is a royal prerogative as well as a divine attribute, by investing the head of each state with power to save, which power he may extend to the most guilty?"

"But is not mercy weakness, where punishment becomes necessary?" interposed lady Courteney—"a weakness that gives an ampler licence for offence to other offenders, in their conscious impunity from punishment. If you now, sir Richard, forgive and receive Geraldine, you only prepare for yourself a second calamity of a similar nature, since by this act of ill-timed mercy to your daughter, you will certainly weaken in the mind of your son the strongest bond of filial duty. For, believe me, the example of parental impotence to punish, which such a weakness on your part will supply, will have more weight with him than all the force of my precepts in inculcating the moral obligation of duty to parents."

"I believe you are right, lady Courteney;

ney; for a wise legislator institutes penal statutes in a state, as much to deter from offence as to punish offenders."

"But where the offence has been involuntary, sir Richard," pleaded Fanny, "and atoned for by speedy repentance, my lady, we should not withhold mercy, since that would be to urge the delinquent to despair, and harden a trivial error to incorrigibility."

"It is, however, necessary," interrupted lady Courteney, "to prove to the delinquent our power of punishing before mercy is extended."

"But deny her not, at least," rejoined Fanny, "an advocate to plead her cause, nor refuse her permission to bring forward such circumstances as may prove in her favour. All I require, lady Courteney, is permission to become that advocate for Geraldine, and that sir Richard would grant a patient hearing to those circumstances, which may serve as some palliation of the imprudent act of which she

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has

has been guilty; to him then will belong mercy and justice, and let him exercise them."

"Such demand is not unreasonable, lady Courteney," observed sir Richard. "I shan't, however, be the readier to forgive Geraldine for hearing all Fanny has to say in her justification."

With this permission Fanny entered on a minute detail of the circumstances that irritated Geraldine's mind and urged her flight, but which detail lady Courteney, trembling for the maintenance of her power over the mind of sir Richard, interrupted at every moment by ironical praise of the young lady's filial duty, or scornful taunts on her *excessive* affection for her father, at a time when her heart was so entirely occupied by her lover as to make her lose all sense of duty to parents, or regard even for character.

This cool irony, and the undisturbed composure with which lady Courteney repelled every intimation that attached blame



blame to herself with regard to Geraldine's elopement, roused to indignation the intemperate Fanny, who, forgetful of the lady's present rank, and regarding only her ungenerous treatment of the child of her former benefactress, retorted on her with such bitterness and asperity, as obliged sir Richard, out of respect to his wife, to order O'Grady to retire.

"You must excuse, as I do, my dear sir Richard," said lady Courteney, with a mild placidity of manner that bespoke the utmost impartiality to the absent Fanny, "the warmth of poor O'Grady's temper. She is a good-hearted creature, but, misled by passion, is unconscious how or whom she offends. However, we who know her intrinsic worth, ought to be ready to make every allowance for the violence of her temper; for my own part, I feel not the slightest displeasure at what she has just said; for I know the goodness of her heart, and that it is natural she should endeavour to excuse the misconduct of the child

whom, from her very infancy, she has so tenderly loved, and to whose errors her own blind indulgence must, without doubt, have so largely contributed. I only regret that the artful, designing, wicked man, who with sinister view has robbed you of your daughter, should so far impose on the affectionate woman's goodness as to make her his dupe, the more successfully to dupe you out of Geraldine's fortune."

"Your mild temper, my dear lady," replied sir Richard, pressing his wife's hand, "your forbearing spirit and amiable disposition, attach me every day still more to you. How good it is of you to excuse in so tender a manner Fanny's wicked passion! and how willing ought I to be to take only your advice, who feel such an interest in my honour!"

"And for your happiness too, my dear sir Richard," rejoined the lady, "which happiness I am anxious you should secure now, and also the happiness of your daughter,

ter,

ter, by your steady rejection of her present solicitations; for, were you to meet major Blandford and Geraldine's wishes, by putting them in immediate possession of the fortune of her mother, that fortune, you may be certain, would soon be squandered, as I am informed he has already squandered his own, in wasteful profusion and every guilty excess, before your daughter, blinded by passion, would be undeceived as to the motive for which he espoused her; and then, when she should perhaps be abandoned to poverty and plunged in distress, she would too late discover she was adored only for her possessions. But by withholding this fortune now, you effectually defeat major Blandford's selfish views, and undeceive Geraldine as to the motive of his affections. His conduct on this disappointment will unfold at once what was his selfish object in seducing an innocent child into error, and, awaked from the fond delirium of passion into which the artful blandishments of this man

man have plunged her, she will feel more sensibly the inestimable value of the affectionate parents whom she has abandoned—have a juster conception of her own interest, and be more willing in consequence to secure to her posterity the fine estate to which she is entitled.

“These are the considerations on which I would have you, my dear sir, reject all overtures from your daughter or her husband for the present. Favours are lavished to no purpose on those who remain insensible to obligation, and you would only be bringing your authority into disrepute, were you to extend now an ill-judged clemency to those who do not deserve it.”

While lady Courteney, with deep design and insidious aim, thus sought to deaden parental regard, and warm sir Richard's mind with indignation against his son-in-law, Fanny O'Grady, in Geraldine's deserted apartment, wept the ill success of the cause she had undertaken to plead, and her own too-passionate temper.

per.—“It is ever thus,” thought she, “that I am perpetually the slave and victim of intemperate passion; yielding unresistingly to a warmth of temper that irritates where it would desire to conciliate, I defeat by my fatal impetuosity the object I would be willing to lay down my life to secure. But of what avail in thy service, dear betrayed child, all the ardour of my zeal, when I possess not prudence to guide or restrain it? Even to that artful woman, forgetful of my deep resentment to her for the angel whom she has replaced, I could, on thy account, now sue for pity—I could bid every indignant pulse be still, and swell her triumph by my abject humiliation—abject indeed, when Fanny O’Grady cowers to foul vice or low deceit, and stoops to reverence less than virtue.”

Full of this idea, and desirous to make every advancement towards conciliation, Fanny, with a self-command which nothing but her affection for Geraldine could supply, addressed a letter to lady Courteney,

ney, in which she apologized with great candour for her late intemperate language, and besought her ladyship, by the friendship which she once bore the young lady's deceased mother, and by the regard which she owed her own fame in the public estimation, to employ her influence with sir Richard to reconcile him to his daughter, and restore peace to the family, of which she would become henceforward, by such generous and disinterested act, the true friend and guardian counsellor.

With regard to the issue of this letter Fanny was not permitted to remain any time in suspense, lady Courteney having almost immediately returned a verbal message by her own maid, importing, that as her ladyship required no apology from O'Grady for her past virulence of language, she declined accepting any; neither would she nor sir Richard attend to her present or future supplication: she was therefore at liberty to retire from the castle as soon as she pleased, and go exercise

tise her sweet temper over the young lady whose recent conduct had furnished such a happy instance of the *beneficial effects* of her *prudent instructions*.

Though this malevolent irony was well calculated to rouse every inflammable particle in Fanny's impetuous nature, yet restraining in the presence of Kitty the violence with which she was bursting, she replied only by a second supplicatory petition, entreating permission to speak to sir Richard or lady Courteney for a moment only; but to which humble message her ladyship returned a second peremptory denial, adding, with most provoking calmness, that her attendance there was no longer requisite; and, to spare her the fatigue of any future visit to the castle, she was recommended to take back with her Mrs. Blandford's clothes and jewels, as sir Richard was unwilling to be importuned in future with further messages from that lady.

A violent flash of indignation, causing  
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in Fanny a momentary suspension of the powers of articulation, precluded on her part all immediate reply, and Kitty was permitted to retire unnoticed, without witnessing the grief and rage which burst forth at last in bitter invectives against her whom she contemptuously termed the *self-erected* lady. After a free indulgence of tears and execrations, in which she was most sympathetically joined by the nursery-maid, who for years had given attendance on herself and Geraldine, Fanny prepared to obey lady Courteney's cruel injunctions, by packing up her young lady's clothes, and sending to order a chaise from the next town for the morning. In her first fury she was indeed prompted to quit the castle on foot, but still hoping to obtain a second interview with sir Richard, she decided to remain for that purpose till morning, when the chaise would be ready to attend her. All her efforts, however, to see the baronet proved ineffectual, for lady Courteney,

as



as sedulous to prevent as Fanny was to seek this interview, did not lose sight of him during her stay for a moment, but by watchful attention, and with inflammatory aim, kept alive in his breast every irritated feeling.

After a perturbed and restless night, during which memory, ever busy at self-torment, carried the distracted woman back to scenes of former delight in the castle, she rose to take her final leave of a place, from whence she was now about to depart, in all probability never more to return. The principal personages in these once-happy scenes, summoned away by death, or excluded by malice, were now no longer there; and one whom she regarded only as a sly intruder, the object of pitying compassion at first, now, aided by vice and hypocrisy, successful and triumphant, led blindfold its infatuated master, and maintained, to the exclusion of its rightful inheritors, absolute sway.

As thoughts such as these flowed over  
the

the agitated mind of O'Grady, her bosom beat high with ill-repressed fury, and scalding tears of indignant anguish poured in two copious streams from her swollen eyes; till, frantic with despair, and reluctant to return to her beloved Geraldine with only hopeless sorrow in her heart, she formed the desperate resolution of forcing herself into the presence of sir Richard, and trying once more with him every persuasive art. Quitting therefore the chaise, which she directed to wait in a turn of the long avenue, she hastened through a short and shaded walk to the castle, with design to meet sir Richard, as he descended from his chamber, before lady Courteney would be stirring. Perceiving him, as she gained the hall-door, to enter the breakfast-parlour, she darted across the hall, and as he took his hat for his morning walk, presented herself before him in the attitude of entreaty.—“ If an impulse of compassion ever moved your breast, if your heart ever softened at the cry of nature, hear me,

me, sir Richard, I adjure you, in the name of her who is a saint in heaven, for your daughter."

Her hands, during this address, were clasped in earnest supplication, tears of soul-moving persuasion streamed from her eyes, and every pleading feature invoked his pity; while sir Richard, assuming a sternness of countenance he felt unable to support, turned away in silence from the suppliant Fanny.

"It is your child, sir Richard, who sues through me for mercy; can you turn a deaf ear to her supplication?—It is the child of her who never heard the plaint of distress in vain; can she supplicate and you not hear her?"

Fanny caught the baronet's hand, which she held in both hers, and during the pause of a moment gazed on him in silent but expressive entreaty.

"Why will you importune me, Fanny, on a subject that I must not hear?" said the baronet, attempting to withdraw his hand.

hand. " Geraldine has given a stab to my peace that I cannot now, nor perhaps ever shall recover; do not speak of her therefore, for I must not, though I might be weak enough to wish it, see the cruel girl. I wish her well, however: go to her, and give her comfort, if you can; but tell her, though she was the delight of my fond eyes, I will not see her; tell her, she, that was the joy of my life, has half broken the heart of her poor father." Sobs choked the softened parent's utterance, and the big tear fell trembling on his cheek, as he turned away from O'Grady.

" You bid me bring comfort to Geraldine," replied Fanny, still detaining him by the hand, " and in the same breath you command me to announce to her a sentence that will half kill her. Could you behold her tears and bitter regret, you would not thus inhumanly order me to doom her at once to despair by such a message. She has no doubt deeply wounded your paternal heart, and committed a  
grievous

grievous offence against filial duty ; but can there be any offence, however enormous, which sincere repentance may not atone ? and can you, sir Richard, of a mild benignant nature, turn a deaf ear to the voice of mercy ? Consider her youth—not seventeen—her early loss of an intelligent mother, who would have been a light and guide to her inexperienced years—and her erroneous education, in which we all had a part ; for you spoiled Geraldine as much by a weak indulgence yourself as I did by my impatient temper ; and, after such consideration, weigh well the exasperating circumstance of the letter with which she was falsely charged as having secretly received, and which roused her indignation. Of this indignation an artful man availed himself to surprise her into error ; it was instantaneous and involuntary, bewailed with bitter regret, and atoned for by sincere repentance.”

“ And would you have me, Fanny, repay that artful man for the injury he has  
done

done me, with Geraldine's fortune? I cannot forgive her, you know, without also receiving her husband to my favour."

"Certainly not," returned Fanny, encouraging hope from the mildness of his words and the absence of lady Courteney. "Only see them—be appeased by your daughter's penitence and tears, but retain the fortune."

"Major Blandford," said the baronet, relapsing into his first inflexibility, "for whom the cruel girl has deserted her father, may console her; let him dry her tears, let him supply to her the place of friends and kindred; but who, Fanny, will give me back my daughter?"

"Let the relenting mercy, my dear sir, of your own tender disposition give you back your penitent daughter in renewed affection; then will peace once more revisit your now desolate heart, your sorrowing child will be restored to happiness, and a saint in heaven will rejoice in your mutual reconciliation."

"You

“You weary me, Fanny, by these fruitless importunities,” answered sir Richard, turning angrily away, “and forward not your own purpose. Go, and tell Geraldine, that as she thought not of her father when she absconded with a lover, so neither will he think of her now, though she were there kneeling to sue for forgiveness.”

“Inexorable man!” exclaimed Fanny. “You may think of her perhaps when too late—when grief and disappointment will prey upon her health, and that the grave cannot resign her. How will you then, sir Richard, answer to God or her sainted mother, the now punishing so severely your own child, for errors of which you are yourself the origin? For did you not, instead of giving strength to her principles by the cultivation of her reason, gratify your own humour by foolishly indulging hers, till her mind became as weak as her body was delicate and fragile? and then, instead of compassionating errors

which flowed from your own blameable indulgence, you cast her off, as she would herself, a few years since, a play-toy of an hour—you abandon her to a neglect she wants firmness to endure, and leave her a prey to despair and anguish.”

“ I never thwarted her will : how could the ungrateful girl leave me ? ”

“ It were better that you had, sir, than mar in her nature’s fair work by mistaken indulgence, and then, at her first lapse from duty, cast her off for ever. Her gentle spirit, unschooled in disappointment and unprepared to meet such severity, will droop beneath it; and you will have to deplore, when too late, her loss perhaps, and your own obdurate disposition.”

“ Fanny,” said sir Richard, turning round to her with gentleness, and while the assumed sternness of his voice sunk to a low note of querulous softness, “ you know I never was obdurate or hard-hearted, and to Geraldine less so than to all the world ;



world; why will you then tease me to commit a weakness which every body must condemn? I still love Geraldine, though she had the cruelty to desert her indulgent father; but I cannot see her. Take her my blessing—but not yet my forgiveness.”

“ Ah! stop not there, dear sir,” exclaimed Fanny, catching his hand and sinking on her knees at his feet; “ not your blessing alone, but your forgiveness, kneeling, I entreat you, best and most indulgent of parents, for your truly repentant and much-sorrowing daughter.”

“ Be satisfied, Fanny, and now leave me.”

“ Ah, dear sir Richard! could you behold our poor Geraldine’s disconsolate looks and flowing tears, you would not continue thus obdurate.”

“ Well, tell her I forgive her,” whispered sir Richard, as he assisted Fanny to arise; “ but I cannot yet see her.”

“ Of what avail will such forgiveness

be, when you exclude her from your presence?" returned Fanny, who was justly apprehensive that, under the influence of lady Courteney, the baronet would relapse into his former determination against his daughter; "let me lead her to your feet, and there bestow on her your blessing and forgiveness."

Sir Richard's countenance relaxed into a smile of kindly assent, giving pleasing indication that he was ready to accede to Fanny's wishes, when lady Courteney, aroused by her maid, who gave her notice of Fanny's return, burst into the apartment.—"Does this private conference, sir Richard," demanded the lady, in a tone of reproachful pique, "denote your proper resentment of the indignity with which I have been treated by this furious woman? After insulting me in your presence, does she now seek your private ear, to warp, by vile insinuations, your noble mind against your unoffending consort?"

"You wrong me, lady Courteney," answered

swered Fanny: "not the vile art of prejudice to any one is my object, but the milder office of propitiating mercy; and to which, as a female, and in the nature of the sex, gentle and forgiving, I am confident, however we may disagree in other points, you will have no objection. Sir Richard sends by me his blessing and forgiveness to his daughter; your ladyship will not deny her yours; and thus shall peace and harmony once more revisit the happy family."

"My blessing and forgiveness, contemned no doubt as my advice by Mrs. Blandford, is not worth her seeking; why should I send it?" demanded lady Courteney, with an air of calm and fixed disdain, as she glanced her eye on Fanny. "In obtaining sir Richard's, you have obtained the object of your mission, and may in that case rest satisfied. You have done more—you have triumphed over me, in making my opinion of no consequence

with my husband, and you have rendered him contemptible."

"No, lady Courteney," said sir Richard, "Fanny has not, nor shall any other person, lessen the very great respect in which I hold your opinions. Your sentiments and hers agree with regard to major Blandford, whom I will neither forgive nor admit to my presence; but I could not help sending my blessing to poor Geraldine, though I am as firmly determined as ever not to see her."

"And why not, sir Richard, with your blessing transmit to Mrs. Blandford's hands the investiture of the Plunket estate?" asked lady Courteney, with a malignant sneer highly provoking to Fanny O'Grady. "Without such gift, your blessing, my good sir, of *countless* value to be sure, would be easily dispensed with; for where filial duty is disregarded, the paternal benediction is of no great estimation. I offer, however, no opinion on the matter:  
to

to you, sir Richard, I owe obedience; act therefore in this affair as you think proper—bring back your daughter here—I shall make no objection, though I am not the less sensible her example may be prejudicial to the purity of my child—her false notions pervert his yet incorrupt nature.”

“No; Geraldine shall not return here; I will not see my rebellious daughter, lady Courteney. And do you, Fanny, bear her back that message from her exasperated father.”

Fanny, who saw herself so near the completion of her hopes in sir Richard's yielding disposition when lady Courteney entered, could ill brook this unexpected disappointment; she descended at first to renewed entreaty; receiving, however, no answer but the same cold rejection, her rage swelled to such unbridled fury as banished from her irritated mind every idea of the respect due to age or rank, and rendered her regardless of all consideration. She turned on sir Richard a  
K 4 penetrating

penetrating eye of calm inquiry, in which mingled a glance of unrepressed disdain, as she demanded—"And what power, weak, deceived, unfeeling man, shall extend mercy to a relentless father, who can feel no pity for a penitent child?—As you hope one day to be forgiven, forgive."

"Let me go, Fanny—you already have my answer—it is useless to importune me further."

"You must not blame her, sir Richard," said lady Courteney, in a sarcastic tone, "for being so importunate, since major Blandford will not welcome O'Grady's return, unless she is able to insure him an accession of fortune that will satisfy his selfish views."

"That fortune, sir Richard, whatever joy it may give to others, will afford you poor consolation, if your inhumanity should leave you without a daughter to enjoy it; in that case the Plunket estate might descend (for what will not successful art accomplish?) to the son of her who was once  
a dependant

a dependant on the generous daughter of that house, and who will not certainly repine, if death should happen to prove now as great a friend to her child as it was on a former occasion to herself."

As Fanny concluded this sentence, she let her eye fall with an expression of indignant contempt on lady Courteney, who, pale and red by turns from suppressed feelings, and her quivering lip trembling with convulsive emotion, could only wave her hand, motioning O'Grady away, unable to reply.

"But may you," continued the almost-frantic Fanny, with uplifted hands imprecating vengeance—"may you, most ungrateful and pitiless of women, want on the last day the consolation of a child to sooth you, that could thus relentless withhold pity from the daughter of her who, when you were without the shelter of a house or the succour of a friend, received you to her friendship and gave you protection!"

The indignant woman rushed from the parlour as she concluded this sentence, while lady Courteney, overcome by the rage which she had been labouring to restrain, worked in a violent hysteric fit; and sir Richard, filled with alarm at his wife's terrific state, was vociferating for assistance, as he held her from falling in his arms.



## CHAPTER VIII.



Others, with softer smiles and subtler art,  
Can sap the principles, or taint the heart ;

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Well may they rise, while I, whose rustic tongue  
Ne'er knew to puzzle right or varnish wrong,  
Spurned as a beggar, dreaded as a spy,  
Live unregarded, unlamented die. SAM. JOHNSON.

IN an agony of grief and indignation, surpassing every effort at description, Fanny O'Grady threw herself into the chaise, and wept incessantly during the first stage of her journey. Ardent and impetuous in her feelings, her sorrow was not of that gentle nature which would yield to sober reflection, or might be restrained by religious resignation ; but, like a mountain torrent, that rages and foams at opposition, it bore in its resistless course every barrier of sound reason that would with-

hold it, till with this self-diffusion it spent its efforts in idle fury, and exhausted its strength.

It was thus with poor O'Grady, when, drained of her force by the excess of her grief, she only saw its inutility, and then felt ready to weep again in gentler tears her own intemperate passion. Her sorrow, embittered by vexatious disappointment, rankling with proud scorn of injustice, and flaming with warm resentment for the injured, was at first violent and ungovernable; it sunk not, however, so deep in the heart, nor was of so lacerating a nature as her regret for the past scene, in which the violence of her temper had betrayed her into an excess of anger that might prove irreparably injurious to her beloved Geraldine; for an incontestible truth it certainly is, no evil in the dark catalogue of calamities incident to human life weighs so heavy on the afflicted spirit as that which includes *self-reproach*.

All Fanny's first violent excess of grief  
redoubled

redoubled on beholding Geraldine, in whom, blinded by her partiality for an object so beloved, she saw only the injured and neglected orphan of her once-adored and deeply-regretted lady, worse than parentless, since her weak father, instead of proving the friend and protector of his child, was but the mere instrument of a malignant and artful woman, to work that child's disappointment and misfortune.

It was in vain for several minutes that Geraldine, after greeting with an affectionate embrace the welcome Fanny, inquired the success of her embassy; anger and indignation deranging in her narrative all method, it was only amidst abuse and execration of lady Courteney, contemptuous strictures on sir Richard's phiant acquiescence with her malevolent humour, and severe reprehensions on her own too indignant passions and unguarded expression of them, that Mrs. Blandford obtained at last the information she sought, and became,

became, from this account, an interested partner in Fanny's angry feelings. Nurturing, however, a profound respect and tender affection for her father, our gentle heroine checked Fanny's too free notice of the imperfection of his nature; but, willing to indulge her in her spleen against his lady, she readily joined in imputing to her malign influence sir Richard's present unforgiving temper and obdurate spirit.

Geraldine, aroused from grief to indignation at this ungenerous conduct of lady Courteney, yielded less to despondence than Fanny at first apprehended, on the baronet's continued displeasure; for the fire of resentment dried up her tears, and her acute sense of her mother-in-law's injustice served to alleviate in some degree her regret for the offence she had committed against her father.

Major Blandford, however, unprepared to meet such disappointment, felt it with still greater severity; the almost idolatrous affection with which he had beheld

sir.

sir Richard Courteney regard his daughter, gave him reason to imagine that he could not resist her importunities for pardon, and that, as willing to forgive as she would be to solicit returning favour, his displeasure would prove of short duration. The major's love, though full of ardour, bore him not beyond this point—it was the certain conclusion to which he aimed at; and now, when made acquainted with lady Courteney's positive determination against him and his bride, and the baronet's inexorable disposition, he almost repented the length to which it had, in mistaken credulity, hurried his unprofitable flight; for though Cupid had lent him wings, Plutus was still the god he worshipped.

The bile which this unlucky cast produced embittered the sweets of love, and threw a sullen gloom over the hymeneal transports of the bridegroom, who internally raged at this unlooked-for disappointment; while the bride, already saddened

dened at the painful consciousness of her indiscretion, sunk into still deeper and heavier dejection at this interruption of adoring attention in her husband. Thus will salutary disappointment water, with tears of constrained repentance, the errors that in triumph and exultation might pass unnoticed and unregretted.

Near a week had elapsed, and this gloom was not passed away, when major Blandford received a letter from a brother officer, suggesting the propriety of his instantly withdrawing from the kingdom, as it was imagined sir Richard Courteney meant, under the influence of his lady, to institute a prosecution against him for carrying off his daughter; and ascribing to Fanny O'Grady's too precipitate nature and ill-regulated application, with her violent and irascible temper, all that lady's indignant and persecuting spirit.

This letter, to the bitter, yet undigested in the major's breast, added excessive acidity, which, raging with increasing acrimony,

mony, burst forth in violent spleen against poor Fanny, whose good-natured warmth he denominated intemperate passion, and her zeal in his and his wife's service unwelcome officiousness, intended, as he observed, more to indulge her own rancour against lady Courteney than for their peculiar advantage. Thus not unfrequently are the best-intentioned actions, when not crowned with the expected success, misinterpreted by ungrateful and misjudging man, who, reluctant to grant to merit its due meed of praise, is too apt, in all dubious cases, to ascribe to exterior acts the very worst motives. The sensitive Fanny severely felt the injustice of this malignant charge, but, with an effort to friendship, suppressing her resentment for the sake of her beloved Geraldine, she retired to her chamber, and there, in bitter and passionate tears, discharged the load with which her full heart was overflowing.

Perceiving from his friend's letter the urgency of his immediately retiring abroad,  
major

major Blandford proposed it to his wife; but possessing no means of supporing in another kingdom the splendid establishment he should like to keep up, or urged perhaps by dislike, he suggested the propriety of her parting with O'Grady; when the astonished Geraldine, dissolving into tears at the idea of a separation she had never thought of, expressed in strong and indignant terms her dislike of this proposal, and declared she would not part with her.

“ Having changed, my dear angel,” answered Blandford, in a tone of levity that ill accorded at the moment with Geraldine's sore feelings, “ the rigid authority of a father for the more gentle sway of a husband, a *gouvernante* can no longer be deemed necessary; and I am resolved, beautiful as you are, I will never be so much of a Spanish husband as to keep in my family any petulant old cat of a *duenna*.”

“ And I am resolved, major Blandford,”  
said



said Geraldine, provoked at his disrespectful mention of her friend, “not to part with my Fanny. I desire no splendour for the present, but am willing in some retired spot, free of all unnecessary expence, to pass the time in yours and her society, till my father shall be reconciled to our union.”

“Your father, my dear Geraldine, will be the more readily induced to forgive and receive us, when he learns we have parted with this violent woman, whose disrespectful treatment of lady Courteney has undoubtedly widened the breach between us and that lady.”

“Impossible, sir!—he must rather suppose I have abandoned all virtue, when I could forget poor Fanny’s grateful attachment to me from my very infancy.”

“It is easy to account for an attachment productive of such advantage to herself,” observed Blandford, with a sneer: “in persons of O’Grady’s rank we always find their attachment of a selfish nature—we  
can

can trace its source to some pecuniary advantage."

"This, sir, is all the prejudice of high birth, and, as such, is equally void of justice as of reason. Whatever Fanny O'Grady's birth or rank in life may be, I know her elevated spirit superior to selfish or sinister objects," replied Geraldine, with warmth; "she can have at least no selfish views in her present attachment to me, which is pure as her unvarnished truth, and disinterested as her own liberal nature, and of which her proposal of regulating our domestic establishment, and supplying to me the place of attendant, without salary or reward, is irrefragable proof. Rendered independent for life by my father, her service will prove a gratification to her own feeling heart, without becoming burdensome on your generosity."

"But having so ill regulated our affairs, my love, in her interview with sir Richard and lady Courteney, is it prudent, after such an adverse result, to commit them in  
future

future to her management? No, Geraldine—I don't like your Fanny; you must part with her, therefore, before we quit the kingdom.

Geraldine, amazed at language so authoritative from the hitherto-obsequious lover, burst into a passionate flood of tears, and turning from him with indignation, declared, in words interrupted by convulsive sobs, that he might depart as soon as he pleased, but it should be without her, as she would not be separated from her dear Fanny.

“Is this, Mrs. Blandford,” demanded the major, in a firm tone, approaching her at the same time, and taking her hand, “your sense of duty as a good obedient wife? Is this the force of your attachment to an affectionate husband?”

“And pray, sir,” retorted Geraldine, snatching away her hand, “is your hatred of my best friend any proof of your affection?”

“If you loved as I do, Geraldine, your heart

heart would not be so occupied with its attachment for this woman, who I cannot endure should estrange from me your love—should rival me in your affection.”

“ And if your love, major Blandford, equalled mine,” returned Geraldine, pouting, “ my Fanny would share your esteem—would be regarded as she merits. But I am resolved, sir, no husband shall separate me from my friend—from my more than mother ; that’s my fixed determination.”

“ In that case, madam, you shall be left to your own free choice, as no divided affection will satisfy me,” said major Blandford, with proud disdain, as he retired.

Geraldine, wounded to the heart by a calmness of manner that appeared to her glowing feelings incompatible with strong affection, was flying to pour her grief and resentment into Fanny’s faithful bosom, when, recollecting it would only add to the affliction of that dear woman, and heighten her indignation against major Blandford,

Blandford, she retired to her own apartment, to give free vent to her tears, and to conceal them.

At dinner, major Blandford, silent and reserved, scarce addressed his wife, and noticed, not by the most trifling attention, her friend, but retired immediately. Geraldine felt hurt at such pointed neglect, and in despite of all her efforts to conceal her anguish, the tears rolled down her cheeks impetuously. Unwilling, however, to expose her secret chagrin to Fanny, she escaped her presence; but the latter, surprised at her sudden retiring and long absence, sought her in her chamber. Geraldine's inflamed eyes and swollen countenance betraying to the tender solicitude of the friend her hidden sorrow, awakened a melting compassion in the pitying heart of the affectionate Fanny, who, pressing her with maternal tenderness to her bosom, inquired with anxious earnestness the cause of her tears, or why, avoiding her  
her

her society, she sought the solitude of her chamber ?

Mrs. Blandford, reluctant to pain Fanny by giving her as the cause of her present distress, spoke of her affliction at her father's continued displeasure, with the necessity it put major Blandford to of seeking refuge in another country ; and bewailed also her own misfortune in having abandoned her paternal home, and offending, beyond forgiveness, so good a parent. On which the generous Fanny, though not without suspicion as to the cause of her evident distress, yet not once glancing at Blandford's unkindness or her own indiscretion, whose consequences now were irreparable, shared with kind sympathy her affliction, and with a melting tenderness that endeared her more than ever to Geraldine's wounded heart, tried every gentle art to solace her in her sorrow.

This sympathetic kindness in the affectionate woman was balm to the wounded  
breast

breast of the gentle young lady, who felt poignantly hurt at meeting thus unexpectedly from major Blandford contradiction and asperity, from whom she looked for nothing short of devoted attention and obsequious affection. Lacerated in her feelings, mortified by neglect in her pride and self-love, and indignant at disappointment, her irritation against Blandford increased, and she became in proportion more determined not to separate from Fanny, to whom, in her present dejected and solitary state, she clung to with increasing affection, as her last prop and sole refuge.

Geraldine, having her mind now soothed by the friendly attention of this kind woman to a calm but melancholy tranquillity, felt her spirits, though still pensive, cease to be so depressed, and the evening in consequence lingered calmly on in serious and social conversation. Major Blandford returned not till a late hour, when,

silent and gloomy, the soft blandishments of love no longer flowed from his lips, nor did his conjugal endearments turn her heart to rapture; but, on his part, a haughtiness and sullen reserve deadened in her every sense of joy, and called forth tears of bitter anguish and regret, with which she steeped, during the silence of night, her solitary and neglected pillow.

On the following day, the same moody humour continued to tinge with dark gloom the manners of major Blandford, who appeared to occupy himself in making preparations for his speedy removal, but of which he forbore to give Mrs. Blandford any particular intimation, till they retired for the night to their chamber, when he thus formally addressed her: —“ I have taken my passage, Mrs. Blandford, on board the Holyhead packet, and to-morrow I shall sail for England; you have need therefore to be prompt and decisive in your determination, whether you  
will



will accompany the husband to whom you have vowed obedience, or remain with your favourite."

Geraldine, fondly attached to Fanny from her infant years, and now deeply hurt and offended at the coldness and neglect of her husband, would not have hesitated one moment to decide in favour of the former; but she felt covered with confusion at the idea that a misunderstanding, so immediately following their recent marriage, should become public, and bring into greater notice, and under still further discussion, her imprudent conduct. How either could she expose to the penetrating eye of her partial friend, her want of influence to counsel or guide the will of a man, for whom she had incurred the displeasure of her indulgent father, and deserted friends and relatives? In this painful alternative, averse to decide, since by either decision she must betray the little power (than which nothing can be more humiliating to female pride, or wounding

to warm affection) that she maintained over the heart of her husband, Geraldine had recourse to tears and gentle entreaties, by which she endeavoured to persuade him not to separate her from her Fanny—"I am willing, my dear Blandford," she continued, with beseeching look and mild persuasiveness of manner, "to accompany you to the remotest corner of the earth—to seclude myself from all pleasure and society—to live even in hardship and privation, if you do not ask to part me from this dear woman, whom, from my very infant days, I have loved as a mother. I have now no parent but my Fanny—no stay for my weakness but her support—no other solace in sorrow: if you tear me from her, you rob life of half its charms—you break my very heart asunder."

"What a reproach to my tenderness, Geraldine, that you should need other support, other solace than that procured you by the love of your husband! Have I deserved this from you?"

"Excuse

“Excuse me, my dear Blandford; I did not mean it as a reproach, I assure you. I would not fain obtrude my sorrows on my husband’s notice, who should be alone the partner of my happiness; for him I would reserve every moment of bliss—the sympathetic Fanny would share my cares and my afflictions.”

“If you loved me, Geraldine, none other would share your bliss or sorrow,” said Blandford, in a tone of pique; “this Fanny should not then rival me in your affections.”

“It is the purity of my love for you, my dear Blandford,” replied Geraldine, with tenderness, “that renders me anxious, while you participate all my joys, to steal from you all consciousness of my sorrows. Less generous and disinterested in my regard for Fanny, I would make her heart the repository of all my cares—I would repose my troubles in her friendly bosom, and look to her for support and consolation.”

“But are you not aware, my dear Geraldine, that my pay is inadequate to the support of a too expensive establishment?” demanded Blandford, in a tone of tender expostulation.

“What need of expence?” questioned Geraldine: “in the seclusion to which we are about to retire, the establishment of which you speak will be needless. Little, I should imagine, would be requisite for our support in the solitude to which, till I come of age, it may be expedient we retire.”

“This total seclusion from all pleasure and society, confined as you would then be, Geraldine, to the company of your husband and *gouvernante*, though it may now please at a distance in idea, would, after some time, appear solitary and irksome enough. Without company or amusement we might soon grow weary of each other's society, and for want of mere employment, or something *piquant* to vary the cloying sweetness of continual love scenes,

scenes, perhaps pick a quarrel with each other by way of variety. To avoid so disagreeable a conjuncture, let us rather occasionally seek pleasure; and for this purpose some expedient must be resorted to to procure the means. I have therefore no objection to the attendance of your favourite Fanny, on one condition."

"On one!—on any condition," cried Geraldine, joyfully, a bright gleam of sudden animation sparkling through the tears in her soft blue eyes. "There is no sacrifice you can require of me I shall not be willing to make, provided you do not ask to part me from my beloved Fanny."

"Your father's relentless disposition," resumed Blandford, "renders it expedient on our part that we should have recourse to some speedy means of raising a certain sum of money, essentially necessary to support the appearance which your birth and future expectations entitle you to make. Your aid on this occasion, Geraldine, may be required; but as strict se-

crecy is of the utmost importance, the condition alone on which I agree to your retaining Fanny is, that you bind yourself by a solemn engagement not to speak to her, or any other person, of this matter."

Geraldine, who instantaneously felt a kind of consciousness that the affair with which Fanny O'Grady could not be entrusted must be of an improper nature, hesitated for a moment; but, pressed by her husband to decide, and shuddering at the idea of a final separation from her early friend, she bound herself, without inquiry or reflection, to whatever he desired.

Major Blandford, whose inordinate love of gaming had produced a complete derangement in his paternal inheritance, looked to a union with the heiress of the Plunket estate for its re-establishment; disappointed, however, in the ultimate object which he had in view in this marriage, he now felt himself, with the additional incumbrance of a wife, more embarrassed

barrassed than ever. Of a disposition so selfish as to make his own will the general principle by which his actions were regulated, the major did not feel himself bound to sacrifice to the inclinations of his wife, even within the first month of their marriage, without first exacting on her part an adequate indemnification; hence, on discovering the necessity of indulging her for the present in her attachment to Fanny O'Grady, he resolved such indulgence should be granted her only on the condition of her assisting him to raise on her mother's estate (on which Mrs. Blandford possessed a lineal claim) the sum of five thousand pounds. This was a mere trifle, at which Geraldine would not hesitate a moment to obtain the society of her friend; besides which, she was to share herself in all the pleasure and splendour it might procure; no difficulty therefore remained but to make out the person who would be willing, on a handsome premium, to lend such a sum, as the young lady was yet so

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much under age as to render it a transaction of a hazardous nature. Major Blandford, however, well acquainted with the money-lending tribe, soon made out such a person, who, on their joint bond of five thousand five hundred pounds, guaranteed by a collateral security of the major's own that covered whatever effects he might possess, engaged to lend him five thousand pounds.

This business was in a short time adjusted, without the knowledge or interposition of Fanny, from whom the party concerned were careful to conceal the whole transaction, as expecting to meet nothing short, on her part, of violent remonstrance and unbending opposition; after which they sailed (the major having procured a renewal of his leave of absence from the regiment), without further delay, to England.



## CHAPTER IX.



The glutton banquet, sloth, and pleasure's song,  
 Have ev'ry virtue chas'd from human kind,  
 And loos'd the sinews of the mighty mind.  
 The tyrant fashion bears the soul along;  
 The rays of God, that dwelt the crowd among,  
 Are hid from man—to stygian glooms resign'd.

— — — — —  
 Yet dauntless, Geraldine, may thy spirit soar,  
 Spurn the vile crowd, disdain their senseless cry,  
 And seek within thyself the worthiest praise.

PRESTON.

ANXIOUS to behold and partake the gay and splendid festivities contrived for the entertainment of the royal visitors, and which at this period rendered the metropolis of Great Britain a scene of more dazzling amusement, crowded gaiety, and pompous magnificence, than Europe any where else exhibited, major Blandford hastened with his wife and suite to London,

Here, without considering the mediocrity of his present fund, or looking forward to what might support the continuation of such expence, Blandford hired, by the month, a magnificent house, superbly furnished, in a fashionable street, and a numerous train of servants, filling in his household every station. To complete his establishment, a splendid equipage was also engaged; and, fully determined to enjoy to the utmost the pleasures of the place, his doors were thrown open for the reception of company, whom he constantly entertained with unbounded hospitality.

This profuse hospitality, whose exercise never fails to procure a numerous acquaintance, with the major's high birth and military rank, gained him a ready introduction to persons of the first consequence, at whose brilliant and crowded assemblies his lovely wife shone pre-eminent in unstudied grace, ingenuous modesty, and feminine beauty. • Amidst innumerable  
rival

rival belles, universal homage attended her steps, and she was every where admired for an elegant simplicity, that, combined with angelic loveliness, won, without desire or effort on her part, all hearts. Her imagination raptured, her spirits enlivened by the brilliancy and gaiety of the passing scenes, a sprightly *naïveté*, superior to disguise as it was unconscious of guile, gave an inimitable charm to all her words, an irresistible grace to every action. The transparent fairness of her complexion, and the celestial sweetness and innocence of her countenance, giving to her delicate features a kind of cherubic loveliness, with her extreme youth, made her pass, at first sight, for a lovely child just approaching the dawn of womanhood, and the men forgot (if in these gallant days they would be inclined to recollect such circumstance) that she was married; till the retiring and blushing modesty which their eager gallantries excited, and the promptly-assumed gravity of her matronly

tronly character, in awakening them to a sense of their danger, called forth in her a new and unconscious charm to fascinate hearts, which more matured graces might strive in vain to entangle. Yet Geraldine, insensible to this idolatry, felt in their admiration no higher gratification than that of regularly recounting to her beloved Fanny, at her return, all the extravagant eulogium it produced; and on which that amiable woman never failed, on her part, to take occasion to represent the danger of flattery to the youthful mind, and to caution her young friend against the insidious poison that lurked beneath such false blandishments.

The marquis of Waramour (as successful in the temple of Venus as triumphant in the field of Mars, and who, in the victor's crown, entwined the myrtle with the laurel), struck with admiration at the first sight of our fair heroine, became her most warm admirer. Though the grand object of universal admiration himself, and stand-  
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ing indebted, at this particular period, for his presence and society to the eager wishes of raptured friends and an admiring public, he contrived notwithstanding to be continually of the same parties as Mrs. Blandford, and attracted wherever she appeared by an irresistible charm, he found conversation dull and pleasure to cloy when not enlivened by her company. Admiration of the wife produced in this nobleman increased attachment to the husband, whose society he sought, and whom he now occasionally encountered at the hazard-table; where, though meeting as opponents, they generally parted greater friends; for success always crowned the high daring of him whose necessities required frequent supplies, while to lose was to the other prime gratification.

Major Blandford, having his spirits unusually exhilarated by this unlooked-for prosperity, was tender and adoring of his wife, as in the first days of his passion, and gentle and complaisant to her Fanny; while

while Geraldine, soothed by such endearing attention, transported with the amusements that on every side invited her free enjoyment, and gratified, in each quiet interval from pleasure, with the society of her early friend, felt, notwithstanding her father's continued anger, delighted and happy. Weeks thus flowed on in a continual round of gaiety and pleasure, during which Mrs. Blandford, in the innocent simplicity of a too-confiding heart, felt not a little gratified at the flattering assiduities of her husband's noble friend, in whose familiar and friendly address, regarding him as the beloved husband of an amiable and virtuous lady, she saw nothing to alarm modesty or wound fame; and for whose distinguished attentions, as the acknowledged patron of her husband, and the man to whom he looked up with sanguine hope for future promotion, she entertained warm gratitude and respectful esteem.

Fanny O'Grady, incapable of receiving  
entertainment

entertainment from the gaudy glare of the pompous exhibitions which London, now every day presented, and which were contrived for the purpose of deluding, with deceitful triumph and false jubilee, the senses of the people, and concealing the horrid ravages of a destructive war, that for so many years had been preying on the prosperity of the nation—Fanny, incapable of deriving entertainment from such amusements, was the only one of the family that felt disquieted and unhappy; she was full of anxiety and concern to behold her beloved Geraldine resign herself, to the total disregard of all intellectual improvement, a willing slave to continual dissipation, which holding her mental faculties enchained, left her leisure for neither study nor rational conversation. An enthusiast in her partiality for whatever was Irish, she could regard the Londoners only with an invidious eye, and was provoked at every one who discovered a predilection for English manners or English fashions.

fashions. In addition to these subjects of grievance was another circumstance, which contributed to render her situation still more unpleasant; that was the kind of rank which she held in the family, and which (elevating her above the company of the upper servants, yet excluding her, except occasionally and in a domestic way, from that of the principals) left her frequently so destitute of all society, that her time, while her former pupil was thus careering a perpetual round of pleasure, lagged heavily on, was solitary and languid, wearisome for want of employment to herself, and embittered by painful anxiety respecting her dear young lady.

Not but Fanny O'Grady possessed resources within her own cultivated mind capable of relieving the dull tædium of slow time, and rousing to energy and action pale withering listlessness; yet, as intellectual pleasures afford the most supreme delight when enjoyed in communion with others, and that the approba-  
tion



entertainment is a powerful stimulus to the pursuit of literary acquirements; and no wonder the mind should sink into inertness, without this stimulus, and that its efforts should languish, when it has no object but its own gratification. This was the case with Fanny, who, though conscious of her intellectual powers, sunk in the dreary solitude to which Mrs. Norton's frequent absence condemned her; and these friends occasionally met in the usual way, which was always at breakfast. Fanny's conversation, partaking of the feelings, lost much of its former agreeableness, and her manners became unconsciously grave and austere. Major Langford took pleasure in remarking this change, imputing it to a proud and morose spirit; or, willing perhaps to get rid of a person whom he considered an unpleasant incumbrance in his family, he availed himself of every opportunity of testifying

testifying his dislike, by rudely thwarting her in her opinions, always accompanying his impolite contradictions with such scornful taunts as nothing less than Fanny's great love for Geraldine could make her put up with.

To this perpetual round of pleasure in which Geraldine was now engaged, she saw no interruption, save in the occasional remonstrance of the vigilant Fanny, till a continued run of ill luck at the hazard-table changed the colour of major Blandford's hitherto-prosperous fortune, and sent him home one morning in extreme ill humour. Roused out of a sound sleep, into which she had just fallen after the most exhilarating exertions in the enlivening dance at a gay ball, Geraldine started up in utter amazement and affright, at the violent execrations on himself and others, which, bursting in loud volleys from her husband's quivering lips, met her alarmed ear.—“ Good heavens, major Blandford !” she exclaimed, half awake, “ what has happened

happened to cause this violent passion?—what's the matter with you? or why awake me, when I had but just closed my eyes, in this alarming manner?”

“Sleep on, woman, if you will, amidst ruin and destruction,” he replied, with frenzy in his look and violent gestures; “but I can't, for I am beggared. I have lost every guinea of which I was possessed, and am seven hundred pounds indebted.”

“And why, Blandford, would you risk that of which we had need for our present support?” inquired Geraldine, completely aroused from sleep by this astounding information. “In a strange country, without money or credit, what is to become of us? This love of gaming is a most pernicious vice, and leads to fatal consequences.”

“It is time enough at least for you, madam, to tell me so, when I have lost that which has been yours,” answered Blandford, furiously. “A man may well risk his own money without reproof from a wife who has brought him nothing.”

“That

"That is no fault of mine, major Blandford; and it is ungenerous in you to reproach me with my present want of fortune," said Geraldine, suppressing with difficulty the rising tears.

"When I lose in gambling the produce of your estate, you may reproach me," he continued, sneeringly; "till then, you had best be silent."

"I spoke not to offend," sobbed the deeply-wounded Geraldine, in words scarcely audible, through her tears. "I only offended," she resumed, after a short pause, and in a tone of resentful composure, "when, in listening, sir, to your persuasions, I abandoned an affectionate father, from whom I was accustomed to receive, instead of such reproaches, kind looks and too-partial commendations."

"You are a mere child, Geraldine, ready to weep at every trifle, and yet not willing to make allowance for the frenzy of a man who is rendered quite desperate by his ill fortune," returned Blandford, in a gentler tone,

tone, as he approached his wife, whom, with an appearance of compunction and returning tenderness, he raised from the pillow on which she had just sunk weeping. "Forgive me, my sweet love, this burst of ill humour, produced alone by my adverse fortune; aid me now with your advice, and tell me how I am to procure the sum for which I stand indebted."

"Alas! I know not. I would assist you, if I could," replied the weeping Geraldine; "but what can I do?"

"We cannot appear here unless I discharge this debt of honour, and we possess no means to carry us elsewhere. What is to be done, my dear Geraldine?"

"I would I could inform you. But do you point out the way—I am willing to lend you every possible assistance."

"The marquis of Waramour would, I know, assist us with a loan, and my pay, as it became due, should reimburse him,  
if

if you, dearest Geraldine, would only make the application."

"Would not such a demand come better from yourself?" inquired Geraldine. "He will not refuse you."

"No, I am sure he would not," replied Blandford; "but having now an object of greater importance in view, and in which his interest may be necessary, I would not like at the present to incur an obligation to him for such a trifle: but if you, my dearest Geraldine, would write to him to borrow in your own name this sum, it would still leave me at liberty to solicit him for my promotion."

Blandford spoke now in a caressing tone, and threw his arms round his wife, with which he drew her to his bosom; on which Geraldine, though cruelly wounded and indignant only a few moments before, was softened, and returned—"I would oblige you, my dear Blandford, if I could; but yet, does my short acquaintance with  
the

the marquis of Waramour warrant such freedom?"

"To him, my dearest love, it is a mere trifle, or nothing; he will be delighted to have an opportunity of obliging you. Promise me you will write, and then let us take a few hours sleep to refresh us."

"Indeed I cannot," said Geraldine, "reconcile to myself the idea of requiring to borrow from a person with whom my acquaintance is of such short duration a sum of such magnitude; pray do not ask me, for I know not in what terms or on what pretence I could make such demand."

"And so, Geraldine," returned Blandford, peevishly, "you will not assist me! Though you share with me all the pleasures and enjoyments money can afford, you are not willing to write even a few lines to procure it; when you know, if I were free to offer my hand to Miss Standish, the rich banker's only daughter, more than a hundred thousand pounds would greet its acceptance."

“It might perhaps be as well for me you were at liberty to do so,” cried Geraldine, in a tone of pique.

“I hope, my dear Geraldine,” said Blandford, assuming an air of reproachful tenderness, “we are happier as it is; I can at least answer for myself, and declare with sincerity, that I regard Miss Standish and her great fortune but as a poor sacrifice offered to the love I bear my adored wife: and sure, if you love me in return, as my doting heart would fain persuade itself you do, you will not deny me the trifling request I now make you.”

Geraldine hesitated, and still objected to comply; but of a gentle and flexible nature, she wanted firmness to withstand his repeated entreaties; and, urged and flattered by her husband, she found resistance vain; and, however reluctant to consent, was at last, in despite of reason and good sense, compelled to promise that she would write a letter the next morning to the marquis of Waramour, of Blandford's



ford's own dictating, requiring the desired loan.

Before noon, Geraldine awakened out of her late sleep, and to a most unpleasant recollection of her unguarded promise, to the performance of which delicacy and a sense of propriety now opposed innumerable weighty objections. How could she, who had hitherto only studied the happy art of conferring favours on others, now, on her own part, descend to solicitations, or incur an obligation from which honest pride shrunk back, and modesty forbade, with a nobleman, to whom her short acquaintance rendered her almost an entire stranger? She felt half irritated and half amazed that Blandford should subject her to the meanness of entreaty; yet so well was she apprised of his obstinacy where money was in question, that to retract from her engagement she feared would be impossible.

Thoughts such as these threw an air of embarrassment and disquietude over Ge-

raldine's ingenuous countenance, which Fanny perceived the moment they met at the breakfast-table, and which, with good-natured intent to remove, she sought to penetrate. 'Though aware that Blandford would not be willing O'Grady should be made acquainted with the cause of his present embarrassment, yet Geraldine, incapable of art and unknowing how to deceive, possessed not sufficient address to elude her inquiries, and the truth came out. Fanny took instant alarm—"You stand on the brink of a precipice, my dear Geraldine," said she, "and my heart trembles at your danger. That danger affects me the more, because your husband, who should be the legal protector of your honour, cannot, or perhaps will not perceive the indelicacy of your soliciting this loan from the marquis of Waramour, or he would not have urged you to do it.—What! shall he suffer a person of your youth, beauty, and inexperience, and that person his wife too, to incur an obligation  
in

in a pecuniary way to a man whose galantries are so notorious! Do you not see, Geraldine, that by this act you would give the marquis a claim on your gratitude, that might render it hereafter a difficult task for you to repulse the future liberties which on that score he would be willing, and perhaps think himself permitted to take?"

"You place this application to the marquis of Waramour in a point of view in which I did not before perceive it," replied Geraldine, "and in a point too, my dear Fanny, which ~~has~~ entirely determined ~~me~~ against applying to him on the subject. Major Blandford, taught from our representation to view it in the same light, will cease to importune me to make such application: but how is he then to procure the sum he now requires?"

"The treasures of Cræsus," returned Fanny, with severity, "might prove inadequate to minister occasional supplies to the insatiable wants of a professed gamester,

ster, who, hurried on by a spirit devouring as the sea, swallows up every thing. But whatever these wants may be, Geraldine, the duty of a wife exacts not that you, on your part, should commit an act derogatory to the honour of your sex to procure for them a supply."

Major Blandford, having his mind disturbed by his late run of ill luck, enjoyed not as profound sleep as usual; he arose therefore before his accustomed hour, and joined Mrs. Blandford and Fanny at breakfast. There, with a tender attention such as of late he had not been accustomed to assume, he rendered to his wife and her friend all those duties which politeness demands, and which, when the heart is interested, are paid with such pleasure.

Fanny, who, from the information she had just received, perceived at once the drift of these attentions, could with difficulty restrain her indignant spirit; she could clearly perceive they were not the respectful homage of affectionate regard,  
but

but the prelude to the favour he required, and as such only she appreciated their value.

The breakfast was scarce over, when major Blandford, drawing his wife aside, entreated, in a whisper, she would retire with him to write to the marquis.

“ I have since reflected, my dear Blandford,” returned Geraldine aloud, “ more seriously on this matter, and would wish you would either apply to the marquis yourself, or think of some other mode of raising this money, since for me to write to him on such subject would be improper.”

“ You cannot suppose, Geraldine, that I would require of my wife what would be improper,” retorted the major: “ have done, therefore, with these ridiculous notions of false delicacy, and write me the letter you promised.”

“ To write such letter would be highly improper; and knowing so, I cannot.”

“What! break your word with me, Geraldine!—not write, after having promised!”

“My promise was rash—given without judgment or reflection; and now, knowing it to be wrong, it is better broken than kept.”

“Do you then hold your word, your word passed to your husband, so little sacred? What dependence, Geraldine, can I place on your plighted faith, if, after this giddy manner, you no sooner make than you again break with me an important engagement? But this is not your act; some meddling person,” he continued, glancing his eye obliquely at Fanny, “has put you up to give me this unlooked-for opposition.”

“Yes, major Blandford,” said Fanny, rising from her chair, where she had still remained in quiet hearing of this short dialogue, and approaching them, “I have been indeed that meddling person, who  
really

really having for the honour of your wife an interest that I am concerned to discover you, her husband, feel not, have dissuaded her from a humiliating act, that might bring into danger as well as disrepute that honour."

"I could have excused on your part such obtrusive officiousness," replied Blandford, scornfully.

"If your intimacy with the marquis of Waramour," continued Fanny, without appearing to notice his rude remark or scornful glance, "be such as to authorize your demand of this loan, such demand will come better from yourself than from your wife, sir."

"It may be presumed," cried major Blandford, angrily, "that I know as well what to do in my own affairs as you can direct me: your advice, therefore, is as unsought-for as it is unwelcome."

"On my part it was eagerly sought," interrupted Geraldine, with impatience to acquit her friend; "a consciousness that

it would be imprudent in me to write to the marquis of Waramour to borrow money, and a reluctance to descend on my part to such degradation, made me willing to consult Fanny on the occasion, whose opinion I found in perfect conformity with my own, and whose advice rendered at once decisive my own half-formed resolution."

"If you knew the duties of a wife, Mrs. Blandford," said the major, sternly, "it would be to conform your opinions to the will of your husband, and to hold secret from the prying inquisitiveness of others the affairs of his family, which he confides to your prudence. You have giddily erred in both these points, and subjected yourself to deserved reproof; however, in consideration of your youth and your being misled, I am willing to look over your indiscretion for the present, provided you give me no further delay, but write the letter instantly, according to your promise."

"You



"You will have the goodness, Blandford," replied Geraldine, in a tone of entreaty, and blushing at her imputed indiscretion, "to excuse me on this point, for I cannot indeed write such letter."

"Can it be possible, major Blandford," interposed Fanny, "that you so far forget what is due to the delicacy, fame, and honour of the sex, as to urge your wife to become a suppliant for money to a man of such libertine principles, such avowed gallantry, as the marquis of Waramour? Are you not aware of the freedoms which in reprisal he might feel himself justified to take?"

"Who dare attack my wife's honour while I wear a sword to protect her?" inquired the major. "I am the defender of her honour; I shall neither urge her to any act which might implicate it, or suffer to pass with impunity in him, or other, the smallest violation."

"You proclaim yourself, sir, the defender of your wife's honour," said Fanny,

sarcastically : " I suppose it is then in order to prove your right to the trust, and have an opportunity of defending her from insult, that you require Mrs. Blandford to write a letter which might expose her to improper freedoms. But that honour, major Blandford, which is not endangered by our imprudent act, is easiest and best defended."

" You mistake the matter entirely, Fanny," replied he, assuming with some difficulty, and for the purpose of succeeding, a milder tone ; " to borrow a sum of money is a mere trifle among friends—not worth having so many words about."

" And why not, in that case, borrow it yourself?" demanded Fanny.

" Because the marquis," he answered, " even with all his great possessions, is, at the bottom, a niggardly fellow, and might refuse me what he would be ashamed to deny Mrs. Blandford. Let Geraldine write, and though not from a principle of generosity, but incapable of refusing a lady's request,

request, he will give, without apology or hesitation, the sum required."

"She must not do it," said Fanny, with firmness.

"I will not," added Geraldine, impressively.

"What, Mrs. Blandford!" exclaimed the major, in a sudden burst of passion, "do you dispute my will?—And you, O'Grady, have you intruded yourself into my family to encourage my wife to rebel against the authority of her husband?"

"I shall always encourage her," answered Fanny, "to maintain an independence of spirit and principle, which is the most certain basis of pure honour. When we contract obligations beyond our power to repay, we commit our honour to another's keeping."

"But how," demanded Blandford, "am I to get rid of the obligation so imperative on me at the present moment, to pay, without further delay, a debt of honour? My wife can procure the sum I want, and yet

yet she is unwilling to lend me her assistance."

"You should not, major Blandford," observed Fanny, "have risked a sum you were unable to pay, or pawned your honour for that which depended on the performance of another. Mrs. Blandford can no otherwise assist you than by her renewed application to her father."

"You are aware such application would be fruitless, or perhaps you would not be so ready to recommend it. Why not bid her apply where success will attend her application?"

"Because, sir, such application would be a meanness unbecoming her sex and condition, and might expose her to future insult."

"Do you say, woman," demanded major Blandford, frowning sternly and biting his lips with vexation, as he approached still nearer to Fanny, "that I urge Mrs. Blandford to a meanness unbecoming her rank—that I expose her to insult?"

"Your

“ Your urging her to borrow money from the marquis of Waramour,” returned Fanny, with intrepidity, “ I can see, sir, in no other point of view—I can qualify by no gentler term.”

“ Most truly indeed have my friends advertised me,” exclaimed the furious Blandford, addressing his wife, “ of the domineering spirit, the plotting genius I gave admission to in my house, when I suffered that meddling woman, at your persuasion, madam, to become a member of my establishment. But know, I shall not endure to have my will traversed, or to be dictated to after this manner. What a ninny would the world suppose me, if I suffered myself to be governed by two women ! I have no objection to your rule, my dear,” he continued, with a sneer, “ provided it hits my fancy, and is gentle ; but to be governed by your *gouvernante* is quite out of the question, and what no man of spirit would submit to. Her usurpation of those rights which she maintains  
over

over you, and the attempt which she has made on the freedom of my will, deserve expulsion: she would be another Buona-parte; but as legitimate authority prevails at the present moment, I am determined, as well as other sovereigns, to exercise it. O'Grady quits, therefore, instantaneously my house: you, Mrs. Blandford, hold no further commerce with her, or, to be decisive in a word, we part for ever. Mark me well then," he concluded, as he prepared to withdraw, "I return not to this house while that insidious woman remains here, with busy officiousness to sow discord between us."

During the above equally arrogant and insolent speech, major Blandford had one hand raised to enforce his determination with his wife, the other, in a repulsive attitude, denounced his indignation of Fanny; after which, snatching up his hat, and glancing on each an eye of scornful wrath, he rushed furiously out of the parlour.

"Go, inhuman man!" exclaimed the weeping

weeping Geraldine, as she flung herself in Fanny's arms; "and though you were never to return, it shall not separate us. No, my dearest Fanny, my only true friend, my best counsellor, you shall not quit me; or, if you go, we will depart together."

Fanny, choked with rising indignation at Blandford's first insolent attack, felt herself completely struck dumb at this arbitrary denunciation, which left her no alternative but to tear herself from the beloved child of her heart's warmest affection; yet when this dear child, in resistance to the cruel mandate of that ruthless man, threw herself weeping into her arms, indignation softened into the most melting tenderness, as, bathing Mrs. Blandford with her tears, she pressed her to her breast, exclaiming—"It would be impossible, my beloved Geraldine, after such a scene, after such a personal attack made on me, I could remain in major Blandford's house; we must part, therefore—I must leave you, though

though it wrings my poor tortured heart to agony, since your destiny, dear hapless child, has united you to him who will not permit my stay, and with whom, after what has just passed, I can scarce indeed hold any further friendly communication."

"But I will not part from you, my dear Fanny," cried Geraldine, as she clung round O'Grady's neck all drowned in tears; "you must take me with you—I will not stay here."

"Alas, my dear child, I cannot! you are a wife, and reason and religion supply innumerable arguments to oppose your separation from your husband, and to impress on your mind the necessity of submission and conformity to his will, in all cases that are compatible with propriety. If my presence here be obnoxious to major Blandford, it is but right I should depart, and proper that you submit to such separation."

"Oh! no, no," sobbed Geraldine—"you shall not leave me, dearest Fanny. I will  
not



not survive your departure; I could live any where with you, but with this cruel man never."

"This man, however, is your husband, my dear Geraldine; the marriage-vow has bound up your destiny in his, and accursed would be the person that should separate you."

"Yet I will not live with him, I am resolved, if he oblige you to leave me, my dear Fanny."

"Say not so, my dear child," returned Fanny, in a tone of pensive but calm dejection; "he is your husband, and in all lawful things you owe him duty and submission. However in disposition he may fall short of your expectation, or whatever contrariety of temper or opinion he may discover, do you at least discharge to him your duty; by which you will, my beloved Geraldine, satisfy your own conscience, and atone in some measure, by this difficult task, the fatal error you have committed

committed in this imprudent marriage, gain the esteem of deserving and virtuous people, and the approbation of Heaven. If I leave you, it is only the better to secure your domestic tranquillity, which my presence here would not fail to interrupt, and to make a second application to your father, whose restored favour may speedily recall you to Ireland, and give you back, my loved child, to the arms of your affectionate Fanny."

"I will not quit these arms, nor your protection," said the still-weeping Geraldine, as she rested her head, in fond and reposing confidence, on O'Grady's bosom. "I care not for this Blandford; he shall not part me from my Fanny. You must take me with you to Ireland, for here I am determined not to remain without you. My father will be moved by my tears and pitiable state, and, enraged at this cruel man's injustice to you and unkindness to me, he will receive us in his house,

house, and me to his paternal favour, and we shall again be happy in each other's society."

"This cannot be, my poor dear child," returned Fanny, in a struggling voice, while she dried her tears and endeavoured to assume an air of composure; "you must not quit your husband. What would the world say of such imprudent conduct? and how would it arraign me as the cause! What a triumph even would such a step afford lady Courteney, who, in her accustomed malevolent spirit, would exult in this fresh act of indiscretion on your part, and acquitting of all blame major Blandford, would impute to you the sole fault! You must not, my dear Geraldine, supply her with such an occasion of exultation, or, by any complaint to sir Richard, make known to her your present disquietude. Whatever your connubial infelicities may be, have always the prudence to conceal them; for the happier you appear, the more the world will respect you; and the  
privilege

privilege of complaint would prove at best but a poor indemnification for its humiliating pity. When my presence here ceases to offend major Blandford, he will be restored to his wonted good-humour, and you to your former satisfaction with him, which, were I now to remain with you, I might eventually destroy. The influence which your attractions give you over him, you must employ to render him enamoured of virtue and domestic life, and to win him from his unhappy propensity to gaming. Retaining no resentment for the past, it is your duty to yield obedience to his wishes, in whatever will not militate against the purity of your principles, the correctness of your demeanour, and the delicacy of your sex; and in this way, by sweetness of temper and gentleness of manners, you will in return gain him over to compliance with yours."

By counsel such as this Fanny sought, but for several hours ineffectually, to reconcile Geraldine to the necessity of their  
immediate

— immediate separation : Mrs. Blandford, however, still drowned in tears, and clinging fondly to her maternal friend, entreated she would not desert her, declaring she would willingly submit to any humiliation, crawl on the ground, and kneel at Blandford's feet, to supplicate him not to force from her her best friend and more than mother.

“ No, my sweet Geraldine,” said the deeply-moved and weeping Fanny, “ you must not submit for me to such humiliation. Though it is now major Blandford's wish that we should separate, he will not have the cruelty to interdict our correspondence, and we may still commune by letter ; nay, after some time of patient endurance on our part, he may see the injustice of his enmity to your poor unoffending Fanny ; and God, who knows and sees the purity of my affection for you, will grant me, I hope, at last to end my days in your service.”

The day passed away in wailing and complaint,

complaint, and innumerable were the tears shed on both sides before these tender friends could withdraw from each other's embraces; yet not even then would Geraldine consent that Fanny should quit London till she would try the efficacy of tears and entreaties with Blandford to obtain permission for her return; though the latter, without hope of success from their prevalence, would fain have dissuaded her against making the trial.

More tenderly than ever attached to her faithful friend, Mrs. Blandford could not endure the idea of a separation, and saw Fanny, after much painful struggle, depart with an agony that was scarce supportable. Though Geraldine, young, and full of life and vivacious spirits, was charmed with the pleasures of London, yet in the absence of domestic felicity, enjoying more than ever the sympathy and soothing consolation of her kind mistress, she regarded her departure with a horror that fell little short of what she should feel at eternal  
eternal

# THE FATALISTS.



A NOVEL.

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Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.

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THE  
**FATALISTS ;**  
OR,  
**RECORDS OF 1814 AND 1815.**  
**A Nobel.**

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**IN FIVE VOLUMES.**

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BY  
**MRS. KELLY,**  
*AUTHOR OF THE MATRON OF ERIN, &c.*



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This is the excellent foppery of the world, that when we are sick in fortune, (often the surfeit of our own behaviour), we make guilty of our disasters, the sun, the moon, and the stars; as if we were villains by necessity—fools by heavenly compulsion—knaves, thieves, and treachers, by spherical predominance—drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by an enforced obedience of planetary influence.

SHAKESPEARE.

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**VOL. III.**

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**1821.**



# THE FATALISTS.

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## CHAPTER I.

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As slow our ship her foamy track  
Against the wind was cleaving,  
Her trembling pennant still looked back  
To that dear isle 'twas leaving.  
So loath we part from all we love,  
From all the links that bind us ;  
So turn our hearts, where'er we rove,  
To those we've left behind us.                      MOORE.

**MAJOR** Blandford, having had timely intimation of Fanny's removal, returned that night earlier than usual. Geraldine, exhausted by her tears, and faint for want of food (of which she had tasted none since morning), was retired to bed, whither (directed by her maid, who bewailed

her lady's depression of spirits and indisposition) he now sought her. Moved perhaps at the waiting-woman's piteous detail of how her lady had passed the day, Blandford appeared softened at this recital of his wife's distress, and alarmed at her indisposition; approaching her therefore with kindness in his looks, and consolation in his manner, he besought her forgiveness of the past, expressed his gratitude for the sacrifice she had made in parting with Fanny, and with tenderness and endearment, essayed by every fond art to sooth her perturbed and irritated mind to peace and tranquillity.

Geraldine, though at first sullen and in tears, yet of a nature mild and accessible to kindness, could not long resist these continued endearments; but moved to forgiveness by his tender supplications, began in her turn, with mild entreaty, to plead the return of her Fanny. The whole of the past evening had she been revolving in her mind how she should entice her husband

husband to permit her friend's return, whose society this unjust and arbitrary privation, even more than her intrinsic merit, now rendered doubly endearing. Aware that money, where it was wanting to satisfy his passion for gaming, or discharge his debt of honour, would alone restore Blandford's good humour, or render him compliant, she ruminated with anxiety every probable means of procuring the sum he required, yet could think of none at which her ideas of delicacy and independence did not revolt, but that of raising it on the sale or pawn of her jewels. These were of considerable value, but having belonged to her mother, were on that account in her eyes of still greater estimation; yet of these (however repugnant it might appear to filial love, or even to female vanity, to despoil herself of such ornaments) she was resolved to make a sacrifice for her second mother, rather than be thus cruelly separated from her, and lose the counsel and support of such a maternal

ternal friend. When therefore she supplicated permission for her affectionate governess and long-tried companion to return, she urged his acceptance of these jewels to discharge his debt of honour.

“It is now too late,” replied Blandford, with seeming indifference, “to apply these baubles to the purpose for which you propose them, as I have already been obliged to have recourse to the friendship of the marquis of Waramour, to procure me the sum I stood in need of. He was indeed, I must say in his favour, readier to oblige than I was to make the application, since unwilling to tax his friendship for this trifling obligation, I would much rather have reserved it for a more important matter. However, the too intriguing and restless spirit of that O’Grady, which would not permit her to keep herself quiet without disturbing our peace, rendered that impossible. You cannot therefore, Geraldine, imagine, knowing as I do the influence this woman maintains over your  
mind,

mind, to the destruction of our domestic quiet, that I will ever permit her readmission into our family."

Geraldine, at hearing this, having her heart too full to reply, turned away and wept bitterly.

"How mortifying, Geraldine," resumed Blandford, "must it prove to your husband not to enjoy your undivided affection! how vexatious to share it with this woman! to whom, if I had no other objection but that of having usurped my place in your heart, it would be enough to make me desire her absence."

"The possession of a heart which you take such delight in torturing, can be of little consequence to you," replied Geraldine, speaking through her tears.

"How can you say so, my dear," said Blandford, assuming an air of reproachful, but tender affection for his wife, which she believed him at that moment far from feeling, "when the bare idea of O'Grady's maintaining, to the prejudice of your love

for your husband, such strong hold on your regard, is sufficient to embitter every conubial endearment, and render me quite miserable? How could any man, think you, be satisfied to have his wife's heart—a wife too whom he loves with idolatry—occupied by such a favourite?”

“Does Fanny,” retorted Geraldine, with warmth, “occupy a greater place in my heart than in yours, sir, is filled up by a love of gaming? That is indeed the true object of your idolatry: yet I complain not—I forbore to reprobate a passion which constantly deprived me of more of your society than my regard for my friend could deprive you of mine.”

“Yes, you complained not—you were unconcerned about my absence, because you did not love me, Geraldine.”

“My love, major Blandford, of a nature less selfish than yours, takes delight in seeing you happy, and of course would not interfere with those pursuits that seemed to render you so; but you, on the contrary,”



contrary," Geraldine continued, bursting into a fresh flood of tears, "jealous of my most trivial enjoyments, interfering with my privileges, and usurping a prerogative that belongs not to you, have banished from my presence my best friend and companion, when you should not, sir, if you knew the respect due to your wife, have interfered with the meanest attendant about her person."

"It is to be presumed," answered Blandford, with the utmost *sang-froid*, "that I am privileged to discard from my house any person whose busy and intriguing spirit might interrupt its domestic tranquillity."

"And it may also be presumed, sir," retorted Mrs. Blandford, in the same recriminating spirit, "that I am equally privileged to remonstrate with you on your excessive love of gaming—a passion still more destructive to the peace of your family, and certainly more incompatible

with your love for your wife, if indeed you can be supposed to have any."

"When I lose in gambling any part of your inheritance, Mrs. Blandford," cried Blandford, glancing at his wife a malignant sneer, "you may then perhaps be privileged to address me on this subject; but until then, I request I may be permitted to dispose of my own as I think proper. You have lived, madam, since our union, in a style of splendour superior to any you have ever enjoyed at Dermont Castle, and have hitherto wanted for nothing: a grateful mind would be content and acquiescent under such circumstances."

Geraldine, stung at this unkind reproach, felt too heavily oppressed to reply; but her bursting heart overflowing at her eyes, she indulged in a shower of tears, of which Blandford (who immediately retired to bed, and soon sunk into a heavy sleep) took no notice.

Bitter, meantime, were the tears that  
the

the heart-wounded and indignant Geraldine shed at this unfeeling taunt: she now severely repented her precipitate desertion of her paternal home, and bewailed, with all the chagrin of betrayed confidence and disappointed affection, her having so inconsiderately rendered her happiness dependent on a man who could thus ungenerously reproach her being for the present unportioned. Exhausted with her tears, like a poor bruised child, who, in its giddy sports, has met a severe fall, she wept herself to sleep; but still smarting from her wounds, she continued to be disturbed, even while she slept, by frequent starts and convulsive emotions.

Out of this broken slumber, giving neither health or repose, she awoke unrefreshed, and in the morning was again spiritless and dejected.

At breakfast Blandford was sullen, and Geraldine in tears, which every instant streamed afresh at sight of Fanny's unoccupied place at the table. Their solitary

meal was snatched in silence and eager haste; after which the gentleman disappeared, and the lady again retreated weeping to her chamber.

The necessity of seeking an interview with her dear Fanny, caused Mrs. Blandford at length to dry up her tears and adjust her dress for that purpose. She ordered the carriage, and, as soon as it drove up to the door, hastened, in O'Grady's friendly bosom, to pour out the mortifying chagrin with which her wounded and disappointed heart was aching. Their interview was long and melancholy, painfully distressing to both, from a recapitulation of the past, and prolonged to extraordinary length by their mutual reluctance to a separation. Geraldine deplored, with unavailing tears, the hapless fate to which she had devoted herself, in such a rash and inauspicious union, of which, before the expiration of even a few short months, she had, as she piteously bemoaned, such reason to repent her; while Fanny, feigning a firmness

a firmness that was foreign from her melting heart, encouraged, by her sage and prudent advice, the subdued and weeping wife to submit calmly to a necessity that was inevitable, and bear her nuptial yoke, however severe, with patience.

Perceiving now the inutility of her longer stay in London, Fanny endeavoured to reconcile our gentle heroine to her immediate departure: this, however, was a difficult task, for Geraldine, still clinging to the vain hope of moving Blandford in her favour, would not quit her maternal friend, without first exacting from her a promise that she would not commence her journey till she would see her again on the morrow; but O'Grady, who knew the fatality of this vain hope, and who imagined her departure was alone requisite to restore calm to Mrs. Blandford's bosom, and reconcile her to her husband, promised, with a kind of mental reservation indeed, that she should not depart from London till a certain hour the next day,

day, but secretly determined within herself to shun carefully any other interview with her dear child, which could only prove afflicting to both, and render their regret at parting more poignant.

When Geraldine rose to depart, and that Fanny saw she was about to lose her young friend, perhaps for ever, all firmness forsook her at this painful idea, and dissolving into tears, she sunk her dejected head on Mrs. Blandford's bosom.

“And must we then part, idolized child of my fond heart!” sobbed the afflicted woman, as she embraced her; “must I leave you!—you, with whom to have passed the residue of my days was combined every idea of happiness! Must I lose you!—lose you by a fatal marriage! and, oh, what's worse! in which you gain yourself, unhappy girl! only misery, disappointment, and repentance! Oh! how much happier to have consigned you, in spotless youth, lovely and innocent, to the grave, than to have seen you so united!

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The tears of fond and selfish regret might then indeed water your pale corse and bedew your tomb, but they would embalm an angel, and be shed to the memory of a sainted spirit—how different from the bitter drops with which, in all the agony of despairing regret, I could now deluge your nuptial bed, and wail, like any despondent wretch, that you are so wedded! Oh! what a world of wretchedness is comprised in that one sad word, including all of woe the heart can feel or the imagination fancy!”

The hysteric sobs with which Geraldine could alone reply to these tender complaints, aroused Fanny from the too free indulgence of her sorrow, and awakened her to an alarming sense of her impropriety in giving way to it before Mrs. Blandford.

To repair this error, subduing by a strong effort the softness that was overflowing her heart, after the pause of a moment she thus continued—“Go, beloved child,

child, before my foolish sorrow shall quite rive your tender heart, or my unguarded complaints unfit you for the performance of your duty—go, and may the Omnipotent, who alone has power to diffuse all the sweetness of divine grace over the bitterness of earthly sorrow, be your guide, your support, and comfort! In the discharge of your duty you shall find peace, and by meek resignation to the divine will, you may sanctify your sorrows: then too shall I regain tranquillity, when I learn, that by steady perseverance in the path which religion indicates, your mind shall rise superior to all adverse events, and that amidst the conflicts of the flesh, it shall rest its hopes alone upon eternity. Adieu, beloved child of my heart!—Heaven bless you!”

“Would to God, my Fanny,” cried Geraldine, as she hung round her neck, in a second fond embrace, “you had never left me!—to me inauspicious and ill-omened separation was it then, and the cause now of our final parting.”

As



As Mrs. Blandford concluded these last words, she hurried away, drawing her veil over her swollen face, to conceal the tears with which she was almost blinded; while Fanny, whose eager gaze pursued her receding form to the last glimpse, sunk, as soon as she had entirely disappeared, in despairing regret on the floor.

Mrs. Blandford was no sooner arrived at home than again shutting herself up in her dressing-room, she repeated her former orders of denying admission to every visitor. There, in lonely and pensive dejectedness, she passed the remainder of the day, anxiously expecting Blandford's return, whom she was determined to supplicate once more in favour of her friend's readmission. He returned not to dinner, nor in the evening; and Geraldine, a prey to anxiety, and after passing a dull restless day, retired to bed disconsolate and unhappy.

Meantime major Blandford, once more a votary for Fortune's favours at the gaming-

gaming-table, came not home till near morning; and then, unwilling, as he expressed himself to the servant in attendance, to disturb his lady, he sought another chamber. Mrs. Blandford, unable, from the disquietude of her mind, to taste calm or undisturbed repose, was awake and heard his return: disposed in her own gentle nature for conciliation and peace, she was resolved to receive him with kindness, nothing doubting that her mild and persuasive entreaty would overcome at last his repugnance to the return of her amiable and beloved Fanny; but, when flying her company, and regardless of endearments, she heard him retire to another apartment, all hope forsook her on her friend's account; and on her own, grief and indignation at being after this manner neglected, burst forth in a violent gush of tears, by which she bitterly wept her too-confiding love thus scorned and ill requited. How did she now bemoan her fatal credulity, in having given a willing ear to professions,

professions that were only intended, as she clearly perceived, to deceive her! for major Blandford, disappointed in obtaining possession of her fortune, which was, as it would seem, the sole object of his selfish views, deemed it useless to assume any longer the appearance of a passion which he really did not feel, and whose assumption had failed of its destined purpose.

From these thoughts, as mortifying to her pride as they were wounding to her feelings, Geraldine passed to the hasty resolution of returning to Ireland with Fanny, better pleased to meet even the repulsive disdain and scornful taunts of lady Courteney, than coldness and neglect from the man who had pledged himself to love her, and in whose honour and truth she had confided. This resolution, gathering strength from the painful consciousness that her personal charms (of which, before marriage, he had made such account) were now without power over the heart of her husband, she rose before her usual hour to  
put

put it in execution. The time which intervened between her rising and breakfast, she employed in packing up her clothes, and making arrangements for her journey, determined, as soon as the morning repast was over, to call on Fanny, and making known her resolution, suffer no objection on that friend's part to deter her from leaving her husband and returning to her father.

This prompt resolution, flowing from a resentment that was equally the result of wounded pride and disappointed affection, supported her with becoming spirit throughout the morning, and taught her even to feel a triumphant joy in conceiving what might be Blandford's vexation and disappointment at her unexpected disappearance ; for the painful throbbing that, in despite of indignation, and a desire of revenge, beat occasionally at her own feeling heart, gave her some idea of what his might experience on the occasion.

In the midst of such thoughts, and just

as she had finished her breakfast, a letter was brought Mrs. Blandford from Fanny. Partaking of the present pensive cast of that kind woman's feelings, it was conceived in terms more tender and affecting than usual, and being her parting farewell, it contained much salutary advice on the sacred duties of a wife, which she exhorted her, in solemn and impressive manner, to discharge with willingness and fidelity. Deriding the idea of her abiding in anger with, or parting in resentment from her husband, Fanny reminded her of the triumph such disagreement would afford lady Courteney, who had so repeatedly and so invidiously declared that Blandford, regardless of Geraldine's person, had in their union sought only her fortune; and which malign assertion their present misunderstanding, if, through her impetuosity, it became public, would fully justify. She urged her therefore, whatever mortification she might privately be condemned to endure, to preserve appearances with the world,

world, in the hope that her father's restored favour, and his investing her with the Plunket estate, would give her back her first ascendancy over her husband, and preserve her from the humiliating sneers and pride-wounding allusions of her mother-in-law. To effect such desirable purpose was now the object of Fanny's mission to Ireland, which she hoped she would of herself be able to accomplish ; and as the prolonging of her present stay in England would only retard the completion of their mutual wishes, and maintain disunion between Geraldine and her husband, the sooner she should depart the better ; and though, conformable to her promise, she would not leave London till the hour appointed, yet anxious to escape another parting farewell, which must prove equally painful to both, the interval (instead of waiting at her lodgings a second visit from Mrs. Blandford) should be passed in some temple consecrated to the worship of the Omnipotent, where, in humble prostration, she

she would invoke blessings on her dear child's head, and success for the service she had undertaken.

Geraldine, deeply affected at the first perusal of this letter, burst into a violent flood of tears, and poured forth most grievous lamentations on the loss of her beloved Fanny. To her darkened fancy every other evil now appeared trivial, in comparison to that of being deprived of the support and counsel of her friend and mother; nor could any obligation, however solemn and binding, prevent her from regarding as her greatest enemy the man that could thus forcibly and inhumanly separate them, and to escape whose despotic authority she considered not only justifiable, but highly expedient. Regretting, therefore, Fanny's purpose of departing without her knowledge, Geraldine reperused her letter, in the hope it would afford some clew that might lead to a probable conjecture as to the route she should take, or where she might expect to join her on her journey.

During

During the first and second perusal of this letter, though Geraldine's heart overflowed with grateful regard at every tender expression from the pen of the affectionate Fanny, her eye passed carelessly over that passage which exhorted her to the performance of a wife's duty, and which, now glowing with warm and indignant resentment, she felt not as imperative on her as her maternal friend represented. With painful hesitation, however, she found her attention rivetted to the succeeding paragraph, in which Fanny so justly delineates what would be lady Courteney's malignant exultation at the discovery of Mrs. Blandford's misunderstanding with her husband, and the mean triumph she would assume over her, on her return to the castle under such humiliating circumstances. Burning with increasing exasperation at the idea of this triumph, of which she was certain Fanny gave no exaggerated description, the indignant Geraldine turned from the insensible husband, whom she  
had



had been regarding with all the angry heart-burnings of deceived affection, to the consideration of the cold, unfeeling mother-in-law, who would treat her inexperienced youth with grave contempt, and return to her tender complaints only moralizing contumely. Sick at heart, and shedding the scalding tears of boiling indignation, the poor, deceived, and tender Geraldine turned alternately from one to the other, but decided at length, after a most painful conflict, to endure any mortification which the disregard and neglect of her husband might produce, rather than encounter lady Courteney's still more mortifying scorn, by seeking, as a neglected wife, her father's protection.

This resolution formed, she proceeded to replace in the wardrobe her clothes that she had been packing up in trunks for her journey; after which she endeavoured to tranquillize her thoughts so as to meet Blandford, if not with affection, at least with patience and composure.

CHAP-

## CHAPTER II.

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When fairy prospects wanton youth beguile,  
 Gay, like their hopes, the self-deceivers smile ;  
 Kind, as their fortune, is the flatter'd mind,  
 At peace within, 'tis peace with all mankind.

PARRIS.

.....

With gentle manners, graceful ease,  
 The unstudied wish and pow'r to please. *Ibid.*

MAJOR Blandford did not rise till after midday, and then (having taken his breakfast in his dressing-room), he went out again without seeking his wife, or inquiring concerning her health, though he had reason to suppose her disquieted in mind, and indisposed in body.

Geraldine, sensibly hurt and irritated at this seeming indifference and cold neglect, felt ready, at the first moment, to give way to tears of bitter mortification ; but resolving, with spirit and indignation, she  
 would

would no longer yield to a dejection which had failed of exciting his remorse, and had ceased to interest his compassion, she approached her toilet to dress, in order, after the example of her husband, to seek abroad for amusement.

While Geraldine was thus employed, vanity whispered the indignant fair, that hers was not a face that could be regarded with indifference; and memory, too faithful in its retention of whatever nourishes self-love, brought fresh to her recollection, that wherever her perfect form appeared, admiration welcomed her approach, and adoring homage followed: why then should she permit the neglect of a husband, whose bad taste alone could render him insensible to the power of such charms, to weigh down her spirits, and cast a gloom over the gayest period of her life, when she had only to present herself in public to be admired and followed? This idea, so gratifying to female vanity, and to which she was also stimulated by a desire of revenge,

made her give additional care to the labours of the toilet; after which, ordering her carriage, she drove out to pay morning visits.

Though received everywhere with apparently warm congratulations on her recovery, and gratified with the homage of innumerable beaux, Geraldine returned home, after her round of morning visits, joyless and unhappy; for no fond heart was there to greet her with an affectionate welcome, and not all the blandishments of adulation could supply to her unoccupied bosom the absence of cordial and friendly endearment. Soon wearied however of home, where no effort of affection, or seeming affection, cheered the dull hours as they passed, she returned but to dress for a large evening-party at the house of a lady of high rank, for which she had a card of invitation since before the week preceding.

Major Blandford, though not accompanying his wife, made also one of this party; and Geraldine, roused at sight of her husband

band

band to a desire of revenging his late slight, was urged to flirtation, with a view of awakening his jealousy, by a spirit of coquetry such as she had never before evinced. Hence every charm of graceful attitude and winning address was employed to excite admiration—every attraction of sprightly humour and gay wit exerted to captivate attention. These exertions on the part of our fair heroine were crowned with the desired success, for no fair one of the brilliant assembly drew round her magic circle a greater crowd of enraptured admirers, or obtained more general homage; even the before-negligent husband, charmed with the return of her gay spirits, and her evident desire to please, could not withhold his admiration; and though committing a complete solecism against good-breeding, he was tempted to offer an occasional compliment on the influence of his wife's attractions; and in utter defiance of modern refinement, which condemns, as obsolete, such assiduities, retired when

she withdrew from the company; and, instead of joining his usual associates at the hazard-table, attended her home.

As they drove there, Blandford, assuming all the tenderness which first won his wife's affections, apologized for, and entreated her forgiveness of his recent conduct; of which the irritability of his mind, on repeated losses and disappointments, rendered still sorer by O'Grady's severe and malicious strictures, was alone, he declared, the cause, as he had not for one moment, he assured her—no, not even while appearing most unkind—ceased to love her with an affection that could bear no other should have part in her heart, or influence over her actions.

The gentle Geraldine, moved by this return of tenderness in her husband, felt it impossible to retain her resentment, but met his affectionate assiduities with forgiving mildness and answering affection. In this manner was domestic peace once more restored, and Blandford averred that Fanny O'Grady's

O'Grady's absence would render it of unceasing duration: yet Geraldine, amidst all these endearments, and in the bosom of her husband, could not repress a frequent sigh to the memory of her absent friend, the loss of whose society she in secret felt; nor could all his reasoning persuade her against this feeling, or that her friend's absence could contribute to her felicity; but of too mild a nature to recriminate, she submitted, silent, though not acquiescent, to major Blandford's opinion, rather than disturb again returning harmony.

The royal visitors had already taken leave of England, and the queen's and the regent's courts were retired to their favourite bathing-places; after which, the town began to thin, and Blandford to grow weary of the confined society it presented. Still eager however in the pursuit of pleasure, and ever anxious to make one in the thickest throng, he proposed to Geraldine an excursion to Paris, whither at present

not only all the votaries in high rank of fashion and taste, but even their servile copyists in a more inferior state, were hastening, with an avidity that gathered strength from the daily-augmenting crowd of Parisian tourists, and whom not even the increasing expence could deter.

Geraldine, though at the time impatiently expecting to learn from Fanny the result of her second application to sir Richard, heard this excursion proposed in a transport of delight; and with all the levity of unreflecting youth, that looks forward to the desired object without weighing its propriety, or taking into consideration the means necessary for its accomplishment, thought only of the pleasure this delightful visit to the emporium of gaiety and fashion would afford. She regarded this tour as an agreeable relaxation, that should pleasantly occupy the dull time which might occur before her father would recall her to his favour; scarce doubting on this point, when the baronet's first  
angry



angry passion would have expended itself in idle invective, but that his eager desire of reconciliation would outstrip her most impatient wishes.

While waiting this desirable event, and the restoration of Fanny's society, Geraldine now thought it useless to give way to repining and impatience; there was more true wisdom, she believed, in enjoying the present scene, than in fruitless anticipation of remote enjoyment; a trip to Paris therefore was no sooner proposed than agreed to, and as each of the party felt equal pleasure in the prospect of this excursion, they were soon prepared to commence it.

The marquis of Waramour, who had already returned to that city, manifested, on their arrival there, in the most flattering manner, his friendship for major Blandford, by the distinguished notice which he took of that gentleman and his lady, and their introduction, through his favour and  
c 4 protection,

protection, to circles of the most elevated rank.

The natural gaiety of the French—the flowing affability and politeness of their manners—the charms of their conversation, which, without possessing any great solidity of reason, can captivate the attention by amusing the fancy—their delicate regard to trifles, which, without embarrassing others, prove in themselves such a constant disposition to oblige—render them to strangers the most agreeable nation in the world. They may be proud, but content with enjoying their own superiority, they do not make us Irish, as our sister nation, feel their ascendancy; they may also be made up to produce effect, but if their manners be studied, they have certainly an appearance of frankness and ingenuous candour, which all the blunt truth of the others, with their apparent reserve, give them not.

These engaging qualities of the French  
quite

quite charmed Mrs. Blandford, who, through a happy effect of the power of attraction, soon learned to adopt what she so much admired; not from any vain affectation of foreign manners, for those which she acquired were perfectly natural and unstudied, but in societies the most refined and elegant of polished life, the fair Geraldine, quick of perception, insensibly attained those captivating graces of manners, conversation, and address, which unquestionably render the French ladies, independent of the aid of personal beauty, so bewitchingly attractive. Quitting therefore the blushing awkward timidity of a bashful girl, her address acquired an inviting, yet modest freedom; her manners became courteous and affable; and her conversation united sprightly wit with gay good-humour. By an inexpressible charm in the latter, she created an interest in the most trifling subjects, and by the delightful turn which she so well knew how to give these subjects, and her pleasing man-

ner of expressing these agreeable trifles, she gave fascination to her beauty, and rendered that fascination, by her wit, irresistible.

Thus the idol of all who beheld her, and as much sought on account of her agreeable talents in conversation, as admired for the charms of her person, Mrs. Blandford felt happy in the delight which her presence everywhere created, and exulted at her success in the art of pleasing. A letter from Fanny O'Grady, bewailing her ill success with sir Richard, though it awakened some tender feelings in her heart, had not power to disturb this happiness; her country and her parent were still dear—the faithful Fanny was beloved and regretted; but intoxicated with adulation, and her spirits elevated by pleasure beyond their proper standard, she was plunged in a kind of delirium, in which the privation of their society was forgot, or but faintly remembered.

In Paris major Blandford enjoyed frequent

quent opportunities of indulging his passion for gambling, which destructive vice he pursued to unbounded excess, but, as a favoured votary of dame Fortune, with a continual good luck, that might be said to equal even his most sanguine wishes. This success enabled him to live in a style of splendour far surpassing that of most of the English officers now forming establishments there; and which splendour, with the beauty and attractions of Mrs. Blandford, rendered his hotel a place of as great fashionable resort as any in that gay city.

This unexpected run of good fortune had also the happiest effect on the temper and manners of major Blandford, whom it rendered tender and complaisant to his wife, and desirous to promote in every possible way her amusement, in return for the crowds which her wit and beauty failed not to draw to his house, and whom, thanks to his own cleverness and address, he rarely permitted to depart till he had

drained their purses. So far from experiencing any thing like jealousy, at the universal admiration which her charms excited, he appeared to exult in their undisputed success; and reposing with entire confidence on her honour and fidelity, was pleased to observe in her the rapid growth of a spirit of coquetry, which, though she shuddered at all infraction of her nuptial vow, caused her, after the example of the Parisian ladies, to place her chief glory in daily multiplying the number of her adorers.

To complete major Blandford's present satisfaction, which might suffer interruption from the fear of being disturbed in these enjoyments, he had sufficient interest with the commander-in-chief to procure the removal of the regiment to which he belonged to Paris, in exchange for one of those which returned home, a mere skeleton, to recruit. Thus happy, and eager in the pursuit of a capricious fortune, that takes its colour from the turn of a die, and changes,

changes, during the unchanging gloom of night, with the fleeting hours, we shall leave major Blandford and his wife (the latter running, in giddy and unthinking chase, a full career of pleasure), while we turn our view on Fanny O'Grady, who, with motives the most disinterested, glowing with all the tender affection of a mother, and urged by the anxious solicitude of one, was gone to Ireland, to supplicate once more for her beloved Geraldine sir Richard's returning favour.

## CHAPTER III.

.....

Cursed my own tongue, that could not move his pity !  
 Cursed these weak hands, that could not hold him here !

CONGREVE.

.....

Henceforth I will not wonder we are foes,  
 Since souls that differ so by nature hate,  
 And strong antipathy forbids their union. ROWE.

FANNY O'Grady, her heart rent with poignant anguish at parting from her beloved Geraldine, her mind embittered by vexatious disappointment, and saddened to despairing regret, quitted London in a state of mental agony scarce describable. Immersed in sorrow, she had no relish for food, and was insensible to fatigue in her journey to Holyhead. This inattention to personal inconvenience produced excessive sickness during her short voyage, from which she suffered extremely.

Regardless



Regardless however of herself, and having no object in view but the completion of her mission, she delayed not to recruit her exhausted strength in Dublin, but proceeded, after the repose of a single night, on her journey to Dermont Castle.

Arrived at the town within the vicinage of the castle, Fanny still felt at a loss how she should obtain an interview with sir Richard, which she was aware must be sought without the concurrence, or even knowledge, of his lady; for if she proceeded direct to the castle, she had no doubt of being denied admission by that lady; or if she should write, requesting permission to speak to sir Richard, she was equally certain of a stern refusal from her haughty ladyship, whom the baronet was accustomed to consult on the most trivial occasions, and without first seeking whose approbation, if he were allowed leisure to deliberate, he committed no act whatsoever. To enter by letter on a detail of how disagreeably circumstanced Mrs. Blandford

Blandford was with her husband, and the dangers to which, in consequence, she might be exposed, was what Fanny (as supplying food for lady Courteney's malice) was particularly studious to avoid; she was, on the contrary, solicitous rather, in a personal interview, to obtain first of sir Richard forgiveness for his daughter, and then, before a full disclosure, to exact of him a promise of secrecy with regard to Geraldine's domestic unhappiness, that might preserve the young lady's feelings sacred from the scornful taunts of her step-dame, and her name free from reproach or derision.

In one of sir Richard's morning walks, Fanny only hoped to encounter him apart, and obtain an opportunity of addressing his private ear; and for that purpose, muffled up, and walking forth at sunrise from the town, she three successive mornings attended. The baronet, however, slightly indisposed, appeared not abroad, and poor Fanny undertook these long and fatiguing

fatiguing walks to no purpose. Irritated at such vexatious and repeated disappointments, she felt one moment ready to resign all hope of meeting sir Richard, and the next, urged by the impetuosity of her temper, was on the point of proceeding to the castle, and forcing herself into his presence ; but the acquaintance at whose house in the village she stopped, condemning each alternative as equally rash and injudicious, recommended her to be patient, abide for the present where she was, and trust to chance, which might befriend her when she would least expect it, for a meeting with the baronet.

Patience, however, though her heart was rich in the virtues that ennoble humanity, and her understanding highly improved, was not an attribute peculiar to Fanny O'Grady ; for what her mind once conceived, it felt ready, in spite of difficulties, to grasp, and her intrepid soul, continually impelled by a heroic ardour, aspired to performances beyond her power to

to accomplish. For one day, therefore, she only submitted, and that with a forced calmness, to the advice of her friend ; but the next, impatient of all delay, proceeded, after an early breakfast, with determined purpose, if she missed the baronet in his usual walk, to seek him at the castle.

Accident, however, on this occasion, favoured Fanny's design, for scarce had she entered on a short passage through the wood to the castle, than she perceived sir Richard in the same path before her, leisurely returning from his morning walk. Quickening her pace, the eager woman soon came up with the slow-moving baronet, when grasping unawares his arm, she constrained him, by the force of hers, to lend her an attention he seemed reluctant to yield ; for frowning angrily on her, he bade her, in a rough voice, disengage his arm and be gone. Fanny, neither awed by his repulsive frown, nor inclined to obey his angry mandate, but desirous to make the most of this favourable opportunity, lost  
no

no time in addressing to the father's feelings a most tender and energetic plea in favour of his penitent child; while sir Richard, with a glance of stern disdain, and shaking off, after some difficulty, her firm hold of his arm, tried, as he walked quickly on, at every pause for breath, to interrupt her; but the intrepid O'Grady, gaining, as she kept equal pace by his side, redoubled energy from this resistance, proceeded to describe, in glowing language, his daughter's tender distress at having disobliged so indulgent a parent, and her continued affliction at being so long exiled from his presence.

This detail of Geraldine's filial sorrow appearing to have no effect on the obdurate father, Fanny felt herself compelled to mention (though it was only in cautious and constrained terms, that evidently preserved a respectful deference for his character) major Blandford's unhappy propensity to gaming; she dwelt, however, impressively on the fatal consequences this  
vice

vice might produce, not only on their pecuniary circumstances, but on the principles of his daughter, who, lovely and admired, full of susceptibility, but neglected of her husband—young and inexperienced in the vices or deceitful practices of the world, and now left, through his inattention, without guide or counsellor (since she was herself, by the violence of the major's temper, constrained to quit her), exposed to temptations, which, in her want of experience, she might not be able to resist, and to incitements to pleasure, which, in the levity of giddy youth, she could not be expected wholly to withstand.

The anxious Fanny urged these and many other reasons, equally persuasive, as a powerful motive why sir Richard should forego his resentment, and recall his daughter, who, cherished by paternal love, and under the protection of the paternal roof, should be less exposed, from cold neglect, to the allurements of vice, and the world's dangerous temptations.

“ And

“ And do you come, deceitful woman !” answered the baronet, passionately, at the first full pause made by Fanny, and when the violence of his own angry feelings permitted him to speak distinctly—“ do you come and strive to make me your instrument to foment vile discord between married people ? Go, Fanny ; this conduct of yours exactly tallies with the account given in major Blandford’s letter to his friend, wherein he accuses you, after having at first created dissension between him and his wife, with the crime (of which, to own the truth, I could at first scarce believe you guilty) of endeavouring to force Geraldine away from her husband.”

“ Major Blandford, sir,” interrupted Fanny, “ accuses me falsely : my best efforts, on the contrary, were all employed to reconcile Mrs. Blandford to the idea of remaining with her husband.”

“ Oh, very truly indeed !” replied the baronet, in an accent of incredulity. “ I may well believe so, when she had all her clothes,

clothes, as I am credibly informed, packed up to steal off with you, till major Blandford's timely discovery of her rash intention, and your instant dismissal from the house, saved me and my imprudent daughter from the scandal of a second elopement."

"You are deceived, sir Richard, most egregiously deceived," resumed Fanny, again seizing his arm to detain him, while she stopped short for want of breath with rage. "I appeal to Geraldine herself to say if major Blandford has not, in this account, deceived you."

"The testimony of Geraldine, bewitched by your artful insinuations, woman, is not to be relied on. You wanted to govern her, as heretofore, entirely; and because her husband, in his love for the foolish girl, would interfere, you sow dissension between them; but your intrigues, O'Grady, have been all discovered, and Geraldine, undeceived at last, is now reconciled to her husband."

"I re-



“ I rejoice to hear it, sir,” cried Fanny, in a tone of satisfaction, and perfectly indifferent on her own account as to the accusation with which major Blandford had so falsely charged her; but tenderly solicitous for the felicity of her beloved Geraldine, she added—“ I pray most fervently that such harmony may long continue, and Mrs. Blandford enjoy all the happiness her amiable and gentle nature merits. But to establish, beyond all possibility of change, this desirable happiness—this delightful calm, shall you not, sir Richard, recall your daughter?”

“ Is it to commit her again,” inquired sir Richard, indignantly, “ to your artful influence over the simple girl? I have no notion of any such thing; the husband whom she hath chosen, let her abide by; she shall not come near me, I am resolved; you therefore tease me, woman, to no purpose, and give yourself unnecessary trouble.”

Sir Richard, with accelerating speed, stepped hastily on to escape O’Grady’s importunities,

portunities, who, perceiving his intention, and urged to desperation by her hitherto ill success in Geraldine's cause, rushed forward, and turning round impetuously on him, arrested his full speed in seizing him by both the arms.—“I will not let you go, sir Richard,” said she, detaining him forcibly, “until you make me some promise in favour of your daughter. I care not what you may think of me; but think at least of Geraldine—think of her youth—her almost childish innocence, and abandon her not to the dangers with which she is environed.”

“You are mad,” replied he, forcing himself from her hold; “lady Courteney heard you were mad, and that you walked each morning here to ill-treat her. In truth I believe it is the case; for you seem not, Fanny, to know what you are either doing or saying.”

“I am not mad, sir Richard, though your stubborn blindness with regard to your unsuspecting artless child, and the  
great

great dangers to which she remains exposed, would almost drive me to insanity. In pity, and for her mother's sake, though you insult me with foul suspicion, revile me, and banish me from her sight for ever, look to her, for she is your daughter!"

"She has abandoned me for a husband, and I will shake her off in turn."

"Oh! say not so, sir Richard," exclaimed Fanny, with a look and accent of beseeching entreaty, whilst the big tears swelled gushing to her pleading eyes: "she is your child; let nature speak for her!—she is the child of her who was soft pity's most tender child, and never turned a deaf ear to the complaint of mortal! For her sake—for that angel of kind mercy's sake, though Geraldine had thrice offended beyond pity or forgiveness, you would receive her!"

"You think, woman, because my easy nature so readily yields to imposition, you will again deceive me; but I know you

all now. Yes, Fanny, I am well aware of your selfish nature, Geraldine's unfilial and imprudent conduct, and Charles's ungrateful and licentious disposition."

"Charles ungrateful and licentious!" repeated the astonished Fanny, laying her hand upon the baronet's arm, and again arresting him in her rough grasp, while her piercing eye, in a beam of fire, shot stern inquiry on his timid soul, "who dares to say so? None would but a fiend! a lying, deceitful, and insidious fiend, who aims at the destruction of your happiness, sir Richard, by putting discord between you and these innocent children!"

"Be patient, Fanny," said the baronet, moved by fear of O'Grady's violence to a milder spirit, "and you shall hear how Charles has deceived us. Would you believe that his impatience to leave the castle, when we all importuned his longer stay, was caused by an improper passion for a farmer's daughter in the mountains, whom

whom he has deceived by false pretences, and with whom, it is supposed, he holds a most improper connexion?"

"It is false as hell! an agent of the devil only could fabricate such a vile tale, and a fool admit it as certain," cried Fanny, letting go the baronet's arm with a swing, and in the act glancing on him a look of insuperable contempt. "If you wish to know, sir Richard," she added, with resumed composure after the pause of a moment, "what urged Charles Plunket's departure from hence, it is I that can inform you. Burning with a passion for your daughter, as pure as it was ardent, he could not resist the charms of her person and conversation without hazarding a disclosure; nor could the noble youth endure to have it supposed, by disclosing to her what he felt, that his views were sordid; the conflict therefore between his high sense of honour and strong feelings of disinterested affection, was too powerful for his strength to support, and obliged him

to retire. But beware, sir Richard, how, lending your credulous ear to such vile insinuations, you cast off your daughter as you did him. Charles possesses strength of mind and resolution to resist the temptations, or encounter the evils of the world; Geraldine may sink beneath them."

Sir Richard Courteney's belief in the accusation against Plunket might have yielded a little to this warm vindication of Fanny; but not daring, through his forced deference to the opinions of lady Courteney, to recede, he tried to shake her off by increased inflexibility, as he coldly and sternly answered—"I want to hear nothing in his defence or her favour; you therefore waste your breath in vain, and but injure, by your officious interposition, the cause you would maintain. I know you now, O'Grady—know your domineering and intriguing spirit, that would fain carry all before you, either by force or cunning. I cannot then believe the misunderstanding that you would persuade

suade me exists between my daughter and her husband ; nor can I believe her in any respect exposed to the dangers with which you menace me. These are only your own petty shifts to entangle Geraldine again within your power, and of which you shall not make me your instrument. I will hear no more from you."

Fanny had hitherto relied, if she could only obtain a conference with sir Richard apart from his lady, on the pliancy of his easy and yielding nature, for success in her application ; that conference had now been obtained, but so far from succeeding to her wishes, she had only met disappointment and injurious language. Irritated at this disappointment, indignant of unjust reproach, and stabbed to the very heart at sir Richard's unfeeling neglect and cruel indifference with regard to the fate of one dear child, and his false accusation of another, the impetuous woman forgot every sentiment of respect with which she had till now regarded the baronet, and darting

on him, in a contemptuous glance, an eye that lightened with all the fire of rage, she exclaimed, as, with a strength that every maddening passion lent her, she again seized and shook him frantically by the arm—"And how shalt thou hear, thou monster of a father, at the last dreadful day, and before the awful tribunal of thy God, the sentence that shall be pronounced against thee!—how shalt thou there encounter the reproachful look of thy angel wife, when she demands of thee her daughter!—how shalt thou then answer to thy Eternal Father the perdition of thy unhappy child, cast most unfeelingly from thy protection, and, in credulous innocence and guileless simplicity, exposed to every danger! Her errors be upon thy guilty head, thou weak, deceived, infatuated man! and may remorse consume thee!"

Sir Richard, now believing from this passionate address, and the wild and furious gestures that accompanied her words, that Fanny O'Grady was certainly mad, felt



felt petrified with horror at the thought of having fallen into her hands, where no one was near to give him assistance; instead, however, of prudently seeking to pacify her rage by mild words, urged by the impulse of fear on his weak mind, he cried out, with all the force which terror lent his lungs—"Help! help! save me! save me! is there no one near to protect me from the fury of this mad woman?"

"I wish I were mad, that I might, with impunity, wreak my vengeance on thee," exclaimed, with increasing rage, the furious Fanny, as she dashed the trembling baronet from her, "thou dastardly wretch! that feelest a consciousness of good within thee, yet, through a base fear of thy termagant wife, meanly shrinkest from its performance! May the terrors of thy own coward soul prove from henceforth thy self-torment, and be thy just punishment!"

At this moment Kitty Hobbs, who had been dispatched by lady Courteney after sir Richard, came running up to his assistance ;

and having heard his cries, and perceiving his alarm, and O'Grady's unbridled rage, called out for help, when she was instantly joined by the footman, who was come also to summon his master to breakfast. Their opportune appearance somewhat reassured the discomfited baronet, who now, disengaged from Fanny's violent grasp, skulked off like a dunghill cock that has lost his comb, to take shelter with his lady ; while Kitty, declaring that O'Grady was quite mad, insisted, after the attack she had just made on sir Richard, it was most dangerous to permit her to range at liberty abroad, and that she must be brought a prisoner to the castle ; to which Fanny, impatient, in the height of her fury, to encounter lady Courteney, gave no opposition, and they led her unresisting between them.

Sir Richard, who had preceded them in their approach to the castle, spread terror and dismay by the account which he there gave of O'Grady's insanity ; on hearing which,

which, and perceiving them draw near, his lady, retiring hastily to the breakfast-parlour, entreated the mad wretch might be kept from her presence, as she could not support the sight of human nature in a state so fallen ; but Fanny, darting forward from between Kitty Hobbs and the footman, sprung after lady Courteney, and burst in the door, exclaiming—"You cannot endure my presence, unfeeling woman ! because you hate the truth, and my integrity is a reproach to your falsehood and duplicity."

"Take her away ! take the poor mad wretch away, or I shall expire with terror !" cried lady Courteney ; "and take care she has not arms about her to commit some act of desperation on herself or others."

"No arms, lady Courteney," replied Fanny, struggling as they forced her from the parlour, "but an eye that can penetrate the foul secrets of your black heart, and a tongue that shall proclaim them to the world !"

“Have this mad woman closely confined, sir Richard,” cried lady Courteney, bursting with envenomed passion, “till you see what can be done to punish her insolence. Carry her instantly away to the dungeon of the castle; and do you see, Kitty, that she be well secured and strictly guarded.”

The footman, though evidently reluctant, was obliged to summon additional aid, and Fanny was led off to the dungeon; Kitty attended to see that she was safe locked up, and to carry back the key to her lady.

“Do not, my lady,” said sir Richard, as soon as the servants were withdrawn with Fanny, “suffer your indignation against this woman to make you forget she is a fellow-creature. It is cruel to imprison her for the trifling injury she has done us; pray order Kitty to set her at liberty.”

“Do you suppose me such an idiot, sir Richard,” demanded, in prompt and angry reply, the irritated lady, “as to suffer this  
odious

odious O'Grady's repeated insolence with impunity? She is now within my power; I am resolved I will be revenged, and that she shall be punished."

"Forget not that Christian mercy, my lady," said sir Richard, in a placid tone, "of which I have often heard you declare yourself, and all the faithful believers, to be possessed, and whose gentle prevalence disposes to the forgiveness of injuries; but let that mercy, according to which you are bound to render good for evil, now plead in O'Grady's favour. You know you will enjoy, as I have heard yourself maintain, more true satisfaction in forgiving than resenting this injury."

"Her reproachful language, sir Richard, is of too wounding a nature to be forgiven; it cannot be endured with patience. O'Grady must now be punished, to stop in future her vile, slanderous tongue."

"The meek passive spirit of a good Christian shall disregard injurious language; and conscious innocence, lady

Courteney, is the best shield against unmerited reproach. Let Fanny O'Grady therefore depart in peace, and do you shew yourself superior to revenge."

"Could you at all suppose me, sir Richard," inquired lady Courteney, recalled by the baronet's last remark to necessary recollection, and assuming a meek air, "influenced by so profane a passion as a desire of revenge? You wrong me by so injurious a supposition. No, a love of order and public justice, which will not permit the peace of the country to be openly violated, influences my present conduct, and renders me desirous to punish O'Grady as she deserves."

"Have a care, my lady, that this public justice—this love of order, like self-love in its effect, might not lead you too far. You are incorrect in imprisoning Fanny on your sole authority; it is better, believe me, to permit her to depart, and so get quietly rid of the business."

"What, sir Richard!" exclaimed, in a quick

quick passionate tone, the late meek lady, "after the attack she has made on you, and the repeated abuse she has given me, not bring her to deserved punishment!"

"These acts on her part, though somewhat violent to be sure, do not warrant our forcible detention of her person, lady Courteney," replied sir Richard, with an air of self-importance and great solemnity. "It is the glorious privilege of our admirable constitution, that the subject's liberty cannot be invaded with impunity; it would be unjust and improper that it should. Instead therefore of punishing Fanny, we may, by this illegal imprisonment, fall under the censure of the law, and expose ourselves to danger."

"How weak you are, sir Richard, to be influenced by such motives, and deterred from inflicting on O'Grady the punishment her conduct merits! Has she not rendered herself obnoxious to the power of the law? has she not made a furious  
and

and personal attack on you? and for my part, she has put me in fear and terror of my life, from her vindictive spirit and violent temper, as I can truly affirm."

"And I am sure his honour has good reason to be in dread of his life too," said Kitty, who entered at that moment with the key of the dungeon; "and if your ladyship had but seen, as I did, the attack the furious woman made on him, you would well say so. If to assault a knight and baron knight of his majesty's realm be liable to punishment, O'Grady is punishable, my lady, as I, who witnessed the fact, can prove it."

"And punished the vile creature shall be," said lady Courteney, "if there is justice to be had in the country! You must therefore, sir Richard, take Kitty before a magistrate, to lodge information against this desperate woman."

"Am I not a magistrate myself, and competent to judge your cause; and why not try her here?" inquired the baronet.

"True!"



“ True !” said Kitty ; “ your honour is not only a justice of the peace, but also a justice of *decorum* ; and as Mrs. Fanny O’Grady has not only broke the king’s peace, but acted out of all gentlefolks’ decorum, you may try her here, and then send her to jail, sir.”

“ And supposing we do try her, Kitty,” returned sir Richard, “ what can we make of the matter but that Fanny was in one of her usual fits of passion ? and sure we, who know how prone the poor woman is to anger, ought not, in Christian patience, to take any notice of these tantrums.”

“ But you shall notice, and punish too, her present conduct, sir Richard,” said lady Courteney, with emphasis. “ The insolent woman shall not offer to me such opprobrious language with impunity ; she shall be punished, I am determined. However, you, sir, as a magistrate, cannot, according to law, dispense justice in your own cause ; you must take her before another.”

“ Why

“ Why so, lady Courteney ?” demanded sir Richard, a little piqued at having his knowledge of judicature called in question : “ May not a magistrate be as well entitled to decide his own cause, as all your religious fraternity are to pronounce judgment in your own favour, and condemnation against others ?”

“ The divine spirit, sir Richard,” replied lady Courteney, modulating her voice to the mildest tone of Christian harmony, “ speaks to the conscience of the elect, and they pronounce judgment only by his inspiration ; but human actions, coming under the cognizance of the law, must be referred to the proper magistrate, and judged according to justice. You must therefore take Kitty as your witness to depose for you, and lodge your complaint against this furious woman before Mr. Squeezer.”

“ If nothing, lady Courteney,” said sir Richard, “ will satisfy your vengeance but lodging

lodging information against this poor foolish woman, why not bring her before Mr. Fairfield?"

"Vengeance, sir!" exclaimed lady Courteney—"vengeance! a passion so inconsistent, as you know, with my principles, so repugnant to my nature, is not what I seek: no, a love of justice, respect for the laws, and regard to the peace of the country, stimulate alone my wish of punishing O'Grady; of which my entire willingness to leave the matter to the decision of Mr. Squeezer, a respectable man, who has filled the magisterial office for many years with great credit, bears ample testimony."

"If to acquire wealth in the chair of justice by illegal exactions, be great credit, Squeezer, I grant you, has gained it as much as any man," observed sir Richard. "But you must know, lady Courteney, for your future information, that in all cases where we are obliged to have recourse, for the redress of petty grievances, to justice, strict

strict impartiality requires that we should not pass the next acting magistrate. Mr. Fairfield therefore must be our man, to whose equal dispensation of justice your ladyship can make no objection."

"He is, of all men I know, sir Richard," replied lady Courteney, "the most unfit to give judgment on such an occasion, for being young in office, he is tenacious in the punishment of these petty offences, which so frequently disturb the peace of a whole neighbourhood or family.; and being himself a person of low birth and mean condition, he has not that deference for people of high rank which would make him properly regard honourable distinction: besides, being so lately appointed to the magisterial office, he is timid, acts not on his own judgment, as Mr. Squeezer would do, but by law authorities; and piques himself with insolent pride on his independence, and the impartiality with which he renders justice."

"And what, lady Courteney," demanded  
sir

sir Richard, with provoking obstinacy—an obstinacy that hardened to inexorable pertinacity at the idea that *he might be* influenced to act unjustly—"what do you require against Fanny O'Grady but bare justice? If therefore I am compelled, at your foolish instigation, and against my own judgment, to bring her before a magistrate, it shall be before Mr. Fairfield, and no other."

"What! sir Richard," exclaimed the astonished lady Courteney, would you be so utterly devoid of reason as to endanger your life a second time with this desperate woman, who may not be mad, but mischievously affects to be so, in order to commit with impunity some act of desperation. You must not take her with you; she must remain confined here till the magistrate gives sentence against her, and the nature of her punishment be ascertained."

"Why sure, lady Courteney," said sir Richard, with an air of answering astonishment on his part, "that would be an  
open

open violation of all justice: go lodge a complaint against Fanny, and not give her an opportunity of defending herself—of making her own vindication !”

“ Is it not the general practice ?” answered the lady. “ Do not the magistrates hear the complainant, without scarce ever thinking it necessary to summon the accused to make his defence; and does not custom in this case, as well as in many others, become law ?”

“ Custom can never authorize what is illegal in itself, lady Courteney,” returned the equitable baronet. “ However, as you seem to entertain such fears of Fanny, you shall be indulged. The very idea of her being deranged does away the malignity of the offence, since a person *non compos mentis* cannot be made accountable for any act whatsoever.”

The chaise was ordered, and Kitty Hobbs, properly instructed, accompanied sir Richard to Mr. Fairfield’s; while lady Courteney, despairing of ultimate success  
in

in this quarter, and determined at all hazards on having the insolent O'Grady punished, dispatched a messenger for doctor Acerbus, having in view, as a *coup de reserve*, insanity properly proved against the dangerous woman.

## CHAPTER IV.

\*\*\*\*\*

My brain, more busy than the labouring spider,  
Weaves tedious snares to trap mine enemies.

SHAKESPEARE.

MR. Fairfield was at home, and Kitty Hobbs, without waiting for the unnecessary form of being regularly introduced, pursued sir Richard *Hotfoot*, as she afterwards expressed herself, into the magistrate's court of justice, where, before his tribunal, and without giving the baronet time to open the cause, she lodged, on the part of her lady, information against the delinquent Fanny O'Grady.

"Can this be a fair statement, sir Richard," demanded the magistrate, "that this woman makes of an assault committed on your person by Mrs. O'Grady?"

"She may call it an assault if she will,"  
replied



replied the baronet, "but I believe in my heart Fanny meant me no harm."

"Not mean you any harm, sir Richard!" interrupted Kitty, "when she shook you violently by the arms, and swore she would wreak her vengeance on you! nay, she would have done so at the time, I am ready to make oath on the Holy Evangelists, if James and I had not come up to your assistance."

"Indeed, Kitty," said the baronet mildly, "I am afraid you advance too much: be always careful, girl, what you affirm on oath; and unless you can swear it, all you say here on that score goes for nothing."

"I say nothing, your honour, but what I can with a safe conscience swear to, in any court of justice in the king's dominions, and which your honour's self must also testify, if you are not willing to favour O'Grady."

"I am not inclined to shew her any undue favour, Kitty," replied the baronet;  
"but

“but I cannot, with you and your lady, construe the foolish deeds, to which passion urged Fanny, into an absolute and premeditated assault on my person.”

“And what, your honour—and what, Mr. Fairfield, your worship, can be reckoned an assault,” demanded Kitty, impatiently, “if it is not one to stop up a gentleman’s way, to hold him forcibly in her strong grasp, to shake him violently by the arms, and vow vengeance on him—all of which, Fanny O’Grady, as I can with a safe conscience make oath, committed on his honour?”

“This is a most extraordinary affair, and will not certainly tell to your credit in the annals of gallantry, sir Richard,” said the magistrate, who was a man of gay humour that loved his joke, and who, perceiving Kitty Hobbs’s inveterate malice against Fanny O’Grady, was resolved to disappoint her malignant desire of injuring that woman, by giving the matter a new and pleasant turn. “Had the attack, *vice*

*versa,*

*versa*, been on your part, and the resistance on that of the lady, the fact might then indeed be recounted to your mutual credit; but as it is, suppress it, my good sir, lest the fair should all cry shame on you; for, take my word, the most modest and sanctimonious among the sex admires the man who is of so courteous a disposition as to be ready to meet her favours, and not render it necessary she should commit violence on his person. Is not that the case, Mrs. Kitty?"

"If you know your office as a justice, sir, no better than you seem to know our sex, I had no business here," retorted Kitty, pertly.

"Such circumstance at least shall never appear on record to the discredit of your gallantry," answered the baronet, in the same joking tone; "for you are, sir, as I am taught to understand, a general admirer of, and devoted to the service of the ladies."

"And how could I be otherwise, particularly when such a fine woman as

the present would be in question, whom it would be downright insensibility not to worship?" returned Mr. Fairfield, with an air of arch drollery.

"I see, sir," said Kitty, in a petulant tone, "you have no mind to take any notice of my complaint against the woman, and that she may again abuse my lady, and lay violent hands on sir Richard, without any dread of being punished."

"As Mrs. O'Grady's violence does not amount to an absolute assault on sir Richard, what can I do in the matter?" inquired the magistrate. "He declares himself she meant him no injury; it was then, in love, not spite, she attacked him; and surely I might just as well punish you, Kitty, for the fire which you now shoot from your bright eyes at my heart, as Mrs. O'Grady for her attack on sir Richard. His person has happily escaped all bruise and battery, while my poor wounded heart cannot boast half so much; and are you ready, dear creature, to redress me?"

"I want

**“I want justice, Mr. Fairfield, not your bantering,” answered Kitty, contemptuously; “justice for my lady, if sir Richard, too much inclined to favour the woman, will not seek it on his own account.”**

**“ And justice you shall have, my dear ma’am; name but the nature of the offence, and I am ready to give judgment accordingly.”**

**“ Fanny O’Grady has repeatedly, sir, on different occasions, and even no later than this morning, offered my lady abusive and insulting language,”** returned Kitty.

“ Words do not constitute an assault,” observed the magistrate, with affected gravity : “ the legislature, aware of what an active member a woman’s tongue is, has, fortunately for your sex, ma’am, given it great liberty.”

“ You are said to be a very fair, up-right magistrate—you are also a gentleman, sir,” said Kitty, persuasively, “ and as such, I am convinced you will feel enraged that a lady should be so grossly abused,

abused, and you will not fail to punish the person who has in so uncivil a manner affronted my lady."

"Most certainly ; yet not in rage, which would be inconsistent with the duty of an upright magistrate, but according to law, my good young woman," replied Mr. Fairfield. "This gross language, offered undeservedly to your lady, might have been perhaps of a defamatory nature, in which case it may be punished as a libel."

"Fanny O'Grady, when roused to anger or indignation," observed sir Richard, "speaks with warmth and energy ; but I must in justice say, I never knew her given to defamation. She is a lover of blunt truth, and expresses without reserve whatever is uppermost in her thoughts, not paying the least regard to persons, by which rough frankness she has no doubt very frequently offended."

"I don't know what you mean by your defamatory, sir," interrupted Kitty, "but I am sure O'Grady's language was very abusive

sive to my lady, and as such ought to be punished; and if you are a proper magistrate, you will not fail to imprison her; for why, sir, should a lady of high rank be abused and affronted by a low-bred creature?"

"I agree with you, ma'am," said the justice, in a tranquil tone, and with a calm air, that expressed great impartiality, "it is only a low-bred creature could abuse a lady; but in that case it must be to herself the greatest misfortune."

"This, however, sir, will not satisfy the just anger of my lady: to prevent a repetition of such insult, O'Grady must be punished—severely punished."

"Let us take care, however, Mrs. Kitty," resumed Mr. Fairfield, "that in our impatience to render justice to your lady, we do not overstep the limits it prescribes with regard to another; let us keep the law on our side, and for that purpose we will consult M'Nally: without occasionally consulting our best law authorities, no

magistrate can expect to go right, I assure you, ma'am."

Mr. Fairfield took down from a bookshelf M'Nally's Justice of Peace, which he appeared to consult with scrutinous precision, while Kitty Hobbs sat wriggling on her chair, impatiently waiting his decision, and sir Richard, with great composure, looked over the newspaper.

After several minutes of apparently profound and close examination on the part of the magistrate, and considerable uneasiness on that of the waiting-woman, the former addressed her with an air of profound gravity, saying—"It is really astonishing, ma'am, that in all this vast compilation of smaller laws, I cannot discover any thing which comes under the head of insult, or abusive language offered to a lady. The law has amply provided against insult offered to magistrates, whose person it protects from abuse in their magisterial office, and custom has rendered  
sacred



sacred that of the clergy ; but the ladies, who should be the queens of admiring man's idolatry, how could the legislature thus neglect them ?—it is strange, ma'am, and extraordinary !”

“ It is, indeed, sir, very strange,” responded Kitty Hobbs, in a tone of evident dissatisfaction, “ that a person of my lady's consequence should be affronted by a low mean creature, and yet have no redress. I can't be persuaded, sir, but the law would find a ready means of punishing such insolent, low-bred persons ; and if I applied to Mr. Squeezer, he would do it, I warrant.”

“ I am as well disposed as Mr. Squeezer to render every justice to lady Courteney, as sir Richard here can bear testimony in my favour,” returned Mr. Fairfield ; “ but what can I do, ma'am ? The law is defective in this point, and supplies us not with power to punish : it is a great pity, no doubt, but in this case I fear without remedy ; for the legislature, not supposing

any person could be so rude as to abuse a lady, has provided no law against such outrage, and the crime therefore, from its very enormity, passes with impunity, which is, to be sure, a most deplorable consideration."

"I told lady Courteney all this, Kitty," said sir Richard, exultingly. "I knew well enough, though she would have me come here, that you could make nothing of the matter. Words are all but the breath out of the mouth, and do no bodily injury; and well for all you women it is the case, else you should often have to account for your idle and malicious sayings."

"That might be the case, your honour," answered Kitty, "with a talkative body, such as O'Grady, whose head, like some fine ladies' dressing-boxes, is filled with nothing solid, but with a kind of varnishing stuff, all made up for mere dash and show; but for my own part, and after the example of my pious lady, who would not say an uncharitable word of Christian-born, I  
shut

shut close my mouth, as we carefully cork up the finer essences that would otherwise *evaporate* to no purpose, and keep my thoughts to myself, unless on proper occasions like the present."

"It is most grievous then, Mrs. Kitty," observed Mr. Fairfield, "that you have bestowed on me this morning such a plentiful sprinkling of your *eau de luce* for nothing. As for sir Richard there, I should not at all wonder if he expired of an aromatic death, suffocated with your finer essence; for my own part, I could not much longer stand it, musk or civet not proving half so overpowering to the olfactory nerve, as the essence of your wit to my astounded sense of hearing."

"I wish, Mr. Fairfield," replied Kitty, tartly, "I had wit enough to teach you to do your duty, and then I should not want a plentiful measure, nor my lady the respect due to her high rank—no, nor Fanny O'Grady the punishment she merits."

“Why what would you have me do, Mrs. Kitty? - The law supplies no mode of punishment for the complaint you lodge, and so much do I feel in justice bound to act conformably to what the law dictates, that I have not courage to twist it to your purpose.”

“You are right, Mr. Fairfield,” said sir Richard; “a just man will never be biassed by any person to act against his conscience.”

“And so, sir Richard,” exclaimed the envenomed Kitty, “between your easy temper and Mr. Fairfield’s indifference and inactivity, my lady cannot obtain any redress for the insult that has been offered her; and she may again be put in fear and terror of her precious life, without any provocation on her part, or hindrance on yours, sir. But tell me not, Mr. Fairfield, that you cannot punish this insolent woman, when I know that for no greater offence than she has committed, a person may be imprisoned till good and sufficient  
bail

baill be found, and she be bound over to the law for her future peaceable behaviour."

"What proof, young woman," interrogated the magistrate, "can you bring forward that lady Courteney is in dread and terror of her life from this same Frances O'Grady?"

"Very good proof, sir—I can make oath of it."

"From what particular circumstance, or on what occasion?"

"My lady told me so: on her word I firmly believe it to be the case, and will swear to it."

"Politeness no doubt requires, ma'am, that all mankind should yield implicit faith to the word of a lady; but in opposition to this, the law, raising its stern voice, declares, that on the simple word of no individual shall the rights or liberties of the subject be invaded. You have therefore no resource but, dropping all idea of a criminal prosecution, petition."

“Petition, sir!—who, and for what?”

“The legislature, most certainly, to enact a law to render the persons of all females sacred and inviolate, and make it high treason of a most enormous nature to speak the truth to women.”

“What, sir! do you imagine or pretend to say,” demanded Kitty Hobbs, angrily, “that the unhandsome things which that vile woman has said to my lady could be truth?—if you think so, you are no gentleman, let me tell you, though you were a magistrate twenty times over.”

“Very possibly not, ma’am,” returned Mr. Fairfield, with provoking calmness. “The magistrate does not always make the gentleman, and I give you credit for the distinction.”

“Beware, Kitty,” said sir Richard, “how you get into a passion and forget yourself like Fanny. In the present case, you cannot be insolent with impunity, for the law, you may see, has better provided for the magistrates than for you women.”

Kitty

Kitty Hobbs perceived this was the fact with great displeasure, but wisely conceiving it would be more prudent to restrain than give way to her just indignation, she retired without betraying any further indication of disappointment than muttering, as a snarling puppy does over a well-picked bone, in an under-tone, her dissatisfaction.

Lady Courteney, who augured no better success from this application to Mr. Fairfield, felt not so disappointed, but had prudently provided, as some sage people are apt to do in desperate cases, for a *dernier ressort*, the doctor. The man of physic arrived in good time, and just as Kitty Hobbs (not indeed without glancing in an indirect way at the indifference of others) had made the panegyric of her own zeal, and expended the ebullition of her fury on indolent and inactive magistrates.

“This is a most deplorable business, doctor Acerbus, on which I have sent to  
consult

consult you," said lady Courteney, addressing the physician, with a contraction of the already-severe brow, which was intended to express in one look melancholy and horror. "Poor Fanny O'Grady, the respectable woman who has had, as you know, the care of Miss Courteney from her infancy, is now mad—downright mad, and we are quite at a loss to know in what manner to treat her."

The medical man, with a reciprocal gravity of countenance, inquired the time when this unhappy change took place, the symptoms which gave indication it might be insanity, and the cause in which such insanity might be supposed to originate; on which sir Richard, in the simplicity of his untutored mind (which certainly possessed not such clear perception as to be able to deduce effects from secret causes) was about to reply, and make slight of the matter, when lady Courteney, apparently more concerned, prevented his explanation by thus continuing:—

"The



“The shock, doctor, which the poor woman received on first hearing of Miss Courteney’s elopement, disordered her nerves extremely; and then her fruitless pursuit of that young lady, with whom she could not come up in time to prevent her marriage, was a second severe blow, to which her already-impaired health was quite unequal. Disappointed in her views with regard to Geraldine, she has ever since given way to chagrin and black melancholy; and now, a recent misunderstanding between herself and major Blandford (as proving the cause of her final separation from a person to whom she was most tenderly attached from her very infancy) has roused this melancholy to frenzy; for her judgment weak, and her passions strong, the unhappy woman was unable to bear up against a disappointment which has upset her reason.”

“This is, madam, unquestionably a very substantial reason for her default of reason,” said the doctor.

“Nothing

"Nothing short of ~~un-  
gentlest~~ speak of such an evil ~~entire~~  
gentlest terms, could have ~~un-~~  
to attempt forcing Mrs. ~~Blair~~  
her husband," resumed Lady  
with an elevation of the fixed  
plus movement of the ~~clan-~~  
"for we all know, doctor Acc-  
unrighteous—how ungodly," ~~re-~~  
devout repetition the motion of ~~the~~  
was renewed—"how sinful a thing  
to separate those whom God hat-  
in holy wedlock; yet such was F.  
sacrilegious object."

"A mad act, truly," repeated the ~~dis-~~  
"Defeated in this ridiculous project  
the timely interposition of major ~~Blair~~  
ford, she posted here from London, to ~~get~~  
sir Richard to assist her purpose, and ~~at~~  
his noncompliance, was proceeding to treat  
him with the utmost violence, and in the  
most desperate manner, till happily pre-  
vented by the arrival and interference of  
the servants—nay, me, sir, I assure you,  
for

From she has always manifested sentiments of the most profound respect and good will, she has now loaded with an unworthy the vilest creature: but I informed, doctor, that in a state of insanity, the poor maniacs are accustomed to the roughest language to those whom, in their lucid intervals, they regard with the greatest friendship and veneration."

"That may sometimes be the case, but is no general rule, my lady," replied the physician; "for insane persons, incapable of reflection, act only from the impulse of the moment; so that whoever falls in with their humour is sure to please, while those who oppose them fail not to excite their displeasure."

"Fanny O'Grady is no more mad than any of us here, unless that temporary madness which anger always excites in her warm and unguarded nature," observed sir Richard, who had been watching for an opportunity to make this remark;

"and

“and you ought to beware, lady Courteney, how you deprive the woman, on any false or frivolous pretext, of her liberty.”

“And I would recommend you, sir Richard,” retorted lady Courteney, with a supercilious air, “to beware of the consequences to yourself, if you set her at liberty in her present desperate humour. It will be much more prudent to consign her to proper hands, and with her the annuity you have engaged to pay her.”

“If she is not mad,” said the sagacious doctor, who had no dull ear for the lady’s last remark, “you have no right to confine her; and if she be mad, it would be highly imprudent to set her at liberty: the question is therefore whether she be sane or insane?”

“That Fanny O’Grady is mad—outrageously mad, my good doctor, there can be no question,” returned lady Courteney, in a tone of great compassion. “Nothing  
short

short of insanity could have induced the poor dear woman to address to me, of all the world, such disrespectful language."

"We shall be better able to decide when I have felt her pulse," observed the doctor, in a tone (though the address was to a lady) somewhat dictatorial. "Mrs. O'Grady, a woman of sanguine constitution, strong nerves, and violent passions, with a weak judgment, as you say, lady Courteney, would be as liable to madness as any other, since those disappointments, which, in persons of a weak and delicate frame, are apt to derange the nervous system, and in consequence impair the health, frequently produce, in one like her, of a strong, vigorous, and robust constitution, insanity. In the former case they prey on a too-refined organization—in the latter they only give a quicker flow to the circulation of the blood, which, ascending in too rapid currents to the brain, produces there these wild and unformed images that disorder the imagination. However, if the disease

is not hereditary, but a mere incidental complaint, we shall conquer it by plentiful bleeding, spare diet, and occasional coercion."

"This is indeed, doctor," said lady Courteney, "the only true system to be observed—the very thing which shall conquer in the poor woman this unhappy malady. To yield to her humour would be only giving additional strength to the disease, and render it in the end incurable."

"I tell you, lady Courteney, cried sir Richard, energetically, "you are mistaken. Fanny is not mad, but a person of as sound and rational judgment as any here present; and you will deceive yourself, doctor Acerbus, if you think so."

"My practice, sir," replied the doctor, who could not patiently endure the smallest contradiction, and who felt now hurt even at a doubt implied that he might err in judgment, "is of too long standing and too successful a nature to incur at the present day any risk of my being deceived. I say,  
Mrs.

Mrs. O'Grady possesses that constitutional fervour which might naturally lead to insanity ; and on what principle, sir, or by what rule of physic, can you contradict my assertion ?”

“On a very plain principle, sir,” answered the baronet, testily ; “that she is rational in mind, and sound in body, and, according to all the rules of common sense, wants no doctor.”

Lady Courteney now rising, and leading the way to O'Grady's cell, entreated, in a mild and placid tone, sir Richard would not interfere, but leave the doctor at liberty to make his own observations, which would be guided, she added, with great complaisance, by judgment and equity.

The doctor followed, and though naturally rough, was yet ready, on this particular occasion, to yield all polite acquiescence to the lady's observation, which comprised, in a few words, as he profoundly thought, great candour and deep penetration.

Kitty

Kitty Hobbs, summoned by her lady, who had the delicacy not to expose poor Fanny, in this grievous malady, to the rude stare of the other servants, joined to lend her assistance; and sir Richard, curious to learn how this affair would terminate, glided after them at a distance.

Fanny, irritated at, and unable to account for, her extraordinary detention, bolted out the moment the door moved on its hinges, with scorn and indignation on her brow, and fury flashing from her eyes at the whole party.—“By what authority,” demanded the enraged woman, in a voice interrupted with passion, and while every agitated nerve shook with her too-indignant sense of injustice and oppression—“by what authority am I detained here a prisoner?”

“By no other authority than that which a tender regard for your health enforces—by a friendship which interests itself in your safety, my dear madam,” said the doctor,



doctor, taking her hand, and attempting, while he felt for her pulse, to detain her gently.

“To abide here, where foul hypocrisy frowns destruction on plain honest candour, and murder has already been busy, cannot be for my safety; you shall not therefore detain me,” replied Fanny, snatching away her hand, with a force and indignation that shook to its centre the solid poise of the doctor, though that was as considerable as a square-built form, and the interior garnishing of continual good cheer, could render the solid edifice.

“Hold her, Kitty; assist the doctor to hold her,” cried lady Courteney.

“And why, foolish woman,” exclaimed Fanny, contemptuously, “why wish to detain me? My presence here, as the clear mirror that, with unvarnished truth, reflects your foul self, should rather prove hateful to you; it is an unpleasant conscience that recalls the recollection of things past, and which you must be better pleased

ed to entomb, as you did the memory of your predecessor, in eternal oblivion."

"How she raves!" cried Kitty, "and look, doctor, if her very eyes are not all on fire!"

"Wretched woman!" apostrophized lady Courteney, in a tone of mild compassion, "how I pity you! and, hapless mortals that we are! dear doctor, to what a state of unhappy degradation, destitute of Heaven's best gift—reason, is human nature liable!"

"Her imagination is indeed disordered—her reason wanders," said the doctor.

"Not half so much as your own, doctor Acerbus, if you think so," interrupted sir Richard, advancing. "The woman is more sound in her reason than those who would insist she is mad; let her therefore have her liberty, I would advise you."

"I would beg leave to recommend you, sir Richard," replied the medical man, "to be somewhat more reserved in giving your opinion on those subjects with which  
you

you happen not to be professionally acquainted."

"Sure your honour cannot know as well as the doctor," cried Kitty.

"It would be cruel in the highest degree, my dear sir Richard, to set poor Fanny at liberty in her present state of insanity: I wonder you could think of it," said lady Courteney, with mild expostulation.

"Insanity!" repeated Fanny, who for the last few minutes had been alternately regarding the whole party, while her eyeballs, which changed rapidly from one to the other, appeared to move in a more distended orbit, and to express, by the wildness of their movements, her amazement at their being all thus assembled: "insanity!" she repeated, with a satiric smile, on now, for the first time, perceiving the drift of lady Courteney's intention; "what a farce! But when the tragedy is performed, the afterpiece comes on to dry up our tears, and set us all laughing. Some

more than few years a dire tragedy was performed here, and now lady Courteney, chief actress in the piece, is willing to present you the farce for your entertainment."

"Poor woman! how my heart bleeds for her!" exclaimed lady Courteney.

"You hear, doctor, how she raves; what can you do for her?"

"Let blood in plenty," cried the doctor.

"Take care what you do, doctor Acerbus," said sir Richard; "to draw blood from Fanny, may make you bleed in turn."

"The strait waistcoat and spare diet, my lady, are the best prescription I can advise," continued the doctor. "We must put her on water-gruel directly."

"That is a kind of food would not agree with your own palate, doctor Acerbus," observed sir Richard; "it was never on water-gruel you became so corpulent."

"The fullness of the corporal body proclaims the emptiness of the narrow mind," exclaimed Fanny, glancing at the doctor a look of sovereign disdain, as she proudly elevated

elevated her tall form to a majestic height above him ; “ try then this recipe on yourself, sir, and perhaps, in taking down the grossness of the one, it may sharpen the too-heavy faculties of the other, and render you in future a better opinion.”

“ Good gracious, how she rambles !” ejaculated Kitty Hobbs, who stood at a short distance from the door, brandishing her arms to impede O’Grady’s progress, if she should attempt to escape them.

“ Lock her in ! I want no further proof, for she is certainly mad,” pronounced the doctor, angrily.

“ And do you say I am mad, you shallow-brained son of physic !” cried Fanny, contemptuously ; “ you bladder puffed up with foul wind and vain-glory ! you empty phial, labelled for rich cordial jalap, yet containing nothing but shreds of physic, and merefustian !—how is the world imposed on by a name !”

“ Back to your cell, mistress !” vociferated the doctor, with increasing rage, and

seizing Fanny roughly by the arm. "I will hear no more from you."

"Doctor Acerbus, have a care what you do; Fanny's tongue may wander into unpleasant digressions, but she is no more mad than you are," said sir Richard.

"And do you, sir Richard," cried Fanny, receding from the doctor's rude grasp back into the cell, "have a care, or they will make you mad also. You, a poor credulous man, that in general believes too much, have good reason to apprehend they may bring a bill of insanity against you, for not now believing all they wish. Lady Courteney declares I am mad, and that vile echo," she continued, pointing with swelling indignation at Kitty Hobbs, "reverberating empty sounds, asserts the same thing; but I am not mad, sir Richard—I possess a calm conscience, and need not fly for repose to insanity. But happy! thrice happy for some, they were insane! as in that case the extinction of reason might serve to cicatrize a wounded and  
sore

sore conscience, and the oblivion of thought (where resolution fails to probe the wound) prove an anodyne to painful retrospections; to such, doctor, go administer your opiates—I require not your assistance.”

“Come away, doctor,” entreated lady Courteney; “you see the woman is mad—it is then unnecessary to attend any longer to her ravings.”

“Her mind may wander, and she may rave a little, but your imposing such an unlawful restraint on the woman is enough of itself to set her mad entirely,” interposed sir Richard, and stepping forward to prevent Kitty Hobbs from closing the door.

“And sure the doctor must know better than your honour,” replied Kitty, retaining, in defiance of his interference, her hold on the key.

“He knows to a miracle,” cried Fanny, ironically, “the art of prescribing judiciously for a mind diseased—confinement, a strait waistcoat, and starvation for the

poor and friendless; but if the patient be of rank, rich, and possessed of influence, and that her mind is consumptive through self-love and vanity, why then, as the case is desperate, and that the stimulus of flattery can alone rouse it to a hectic glow, he will give it a plentiful doze of this titillating medicine."

"We shall try what your own prescription shall do for you, you mad wretch!" said the enraged doctor, pushing Fanny furiously into the middle of the apartment from the door, which he closed with a sudden and loud crash, and doubly locked on the supposed maniac.

Fanny, irritated almost to frenzy at being treated with such disrespect, and at seeing sir Richard (who could have, on his own part, no malign or sinister object in view) remain a passive spectator of this last act of oppression, continued to revile and execrate the whole party, long after they had ascended out of hearing, in such  
an



an outrageous manner as would give an indifferent hearer good cause to suppose in her a complete alienation of reason.

Lady Courteney and doctor Acerbus took occasion, from this excessive fury in the deeply-exasperated woman, to impress more strongly on the baronet's mind the idea of her insanity—"I have indeed observed," said the man of easy faith, in reply to these assertions, "that poor Fanny's mind did betimes wander extremely. She spoke of many things, the meaning of which I could not rightly understand, like one a little beside herself, and with a quickness that I think is peculiar to insane people."

"The rapidity of her ideas, and the force with which she gives them utterance, is an indubitable proof of her insanity," said the doctor.

"There was something, however, extremely pointed—something of great force and perfect coherency, displaying keen

wit, as well as rationality in her attack on yourself, doctor," remarked sir Richard.

"I have often observed," replied the doctor, gruffly, "in persons labouring under mental derangement, and who, even in their lucid intervals, were naturally stupid, a force of expression which frenzy alone could give, and a coherency of thought that would imply perfect rationality, if, as in the case of Mrs. O'Grady, they did not fly off from this sound reasoning in an instant; but you saw yourself, sir Richard, how she wandered from me to subjects quite incomprehensible."

Having ascended by this time to the drawing-room, and dismissed Kitty, a council was here held how to dispose of Fanny, in which sir Richard, as now yielding a little to the general opinion, was permitted to take part; but as his single voice bore no proportional weight against the united voices of the doctor and his lady, he might just as well not have interfered in the deliberation,

liberation, since it was determined by a majority of votes, that Fanny O'Grady, incompetent in mind to take care of herself, should be consigned to the charge of doctor Acerbus. The doctor, consenting to stay dinner, agreed to convey her at night, in the baronet's chaise, to the County Infirmary, of which he gave timely intimation to the governor, directing him, by a special messenger, to leave two stout fellows to attend his coming, who should be able to manage the maniac.

CHAPTER V.  
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Thou should'st be mad,  
And I, to make thee mad, do mock thee thus.

SHAKESPEARE.

DOCTOR Acerbus, not only agreeably entertained, but most sumptuously regaled at the castle, thought not of his patient, when chaste evening, led on by sober twilight, made, as ardent Sol retired, her modest appearance; but either unwilling to relinquish the pleasures of the table, or willing perhaps to shroud his present undertaking in profound darkness, deferred Fanny's removal, till sombre Night had for some time spread her black mantle, and enveloped in utter darkness the grey horizon.

Fanny's angry passions, calmed during the day by sober reflection and spare diet,  
she

she gave no opposition to this removal, though the doctor and Kitty (whom lady Courteney would alone permit to assist him), willing to persuade themselves that she would prove refractory, had provided a piece of jack-cord, with which they manacled her hands to prevent resistance, and a large handkerchief, which was bound tight across her mouth, to suppress her cries, if she should utter any.

To this unpleasant operation, however, and her forcible removal, Fanny quietly submitted, from a perfect conviction that she could be nowhere more the victim of oppression than in the power of lady Courteney, and that her very calmness and submission on this occasion, must of itself disprove that lady's malicious allegation of her insanity. The doctor and Kitty might perhaps have proceeded to these extremities, in the hope of rousing Fanny to the frenzy which they actually desired, and which was necessary to establish their opinion—in the one flowing from a view to his

self-interest—in the other, from a desire to gratify the malignity of her evil nature.

Doctor Acerbus had feasted profusely on a sumptuous dinner, which he had diluted with plenty of excellent old port, as the best stimulus for good digestion. The supper, exquisitely prepared and of high flavour, so powerfully assailed the good doctor's olfactory nerve, as to put to instant flight his constant maxim, that hot and heavy suppers were the destruction of the human species. Thus gorged with the ample repletion of dinner and supper, the animal spirits became heavy and depressed to such a degree, that not all the full bumpers of generous madeira, quaffed plentifully after the last meal, could render them lively or buoyant. The motion of the carriage, instead of dispelling the growing heaviness, increased it to still greater depression, till, like the swing of a cradle hurled to and fro by a good old nurse, it lulled into profound slumber the now-snoring doctor.

In

In Fanny the animal spirits had been this day kept active and afloat by spare diet, and her intellects sharpened by the extremity of her situation; no lethargic humour flowed over her mind, and deadened its faculties; no drowsiness stole on her clear thought, or obscured the just perception of her senses. Not destitute of abilities to meet conjectures as they arose, Fanny availed herself of the present; and while the doctor was plunged in the oblivion of deep sleep, disengaged her hands from the cords with which he had bound them; and then, in a spirit of retaliation, which would not permit her to be deficient in returning the *compliment* paid her, she made use of the same instrument in bracing together, in even a still more firm manner, the hands of the sleeping doctor. Not content however with fast binding up his hands, in return for the restraint which he had imposed on hers, she resolved to place his ear in equally-severe durance, as a punishment for his having attended to the malevolent

malevolent suggestions of another, rather than to the clear unprejudiced dictates of his own judgment; and with this view, she detached from some part of her dress a piece of narrow tape, on the end of which she formed a noose, and in this noose adroitly caught the soft lob ear of the doctor. This operation performed, Fanny attached the other end of the tape (at such a degree of tension as might permit it, from its own elasticity, to work on the ear) to the cord with which his hands were bound together, so that every movement which, on his awakening, he might make to disengage his hands, must, by playing on the organ of sound, give a tug of the hard tape, which that soft member would be likely to feel most sensibly.

During all this work the doctor stirred not, but still slept so profoundly, as induced the humorous Fanny to tie the bandage across his eyes, which she had withdrawn from her own mouth, that when suddenly roused, he might find some difficulty



culty in knowing himself, and still more in making himself known to others.

While Fanny, with gay but innocent mischief in her heart, and sportive humour in her eye, was thus performing on the scientific operator himself this strange operation, the chaise had nearly gained the town, on perceiving which, she drew the string, and in a low voice ordering the coachman to stop, indicated with one finger on her closed lips the necessity of silence, and with another, directed to the still-sleeping doctor, marked his situation; then, softly unclosing the door, slipped out, and stepped hastily on to the house of her friend, while the sly coachman, laughing in his sleeve, moved slowly on, as doctor Acerbus had directed, to the County Infirmary.

Mrs. Harty, a widow of comfortable circumstances, who having no family, had retired from business, and the acquaintance in the town at whose house Fanny had made her abode for the last few days, became,

came, as the evening began to decline; uneasy at her long absence; and yielding to her apprehensions on her friend's account, she had dispatched a messenger to the castle, to inquire the cause of her delay, or attend her home on her return. This messenger could neither see Mrs. O'Grady, nor obtain at the castle any satisfactory information as to the cause of her being detained there, till one of the old servants, with all of whom Fanny was a particular favourite, followed him out, and gave him a hint concerning her forced detention and imputed madness.

Mrs. Harty, aware of lady Courteney's rooted dislike to Fanny, was so alarmed at this information, that she would have proceeded without delay to the castle, but that the lateness of the hour must have rendered her visit to persons of their rank an improper intrusion. Feeling little disposed for rest after this unpleasant information, Mrs. Harty, instead of retiring at her usual hour, sat ruminating on the business,

business, when a loud knocking at the door aroused her attention, and created a new hope it might be Fanny. Not Fanny, however, but Mr. Fairfield, appeared at the door, who, having dined in town, and returning home late, was induced, on perceiving light as he passed the house, and recollecting the circumstances of the morning, to call and inquire after Mrs. O'Grady. Mrs. Harty, glad to have some person to whom she could freely unburthen all her apprehensions respecting her friend, entreated him to walk in, and detailed, in return for his information of the morning transaction, the account which she had received from her servant on his return from the castle.

They were still conversing on the subject, when a well-known knock on the door again awakened the friendly widow's attention, and she flew to receive the welcome Fanny, who, having now lost, in the pleasant revenge she had been taking of the doctor, all recollection of her late  
anger

anger and indignation, gave them, on her entrance, a most ludicrous account of her supposed insanity—the treatment which in consequence she had received—her being manacled, and conveyed from the castle a prisoner by doctor Acerbus—her escape, and retaliation on her keeper.

Mr. Fairfield, delighted beyond expression with this humorous relation, at which he laughed most heartily, hurried off to the infirmary, disguised in the servant's great-coat, to enjoy *à couvert* the last scene of this comedy. He arrived there by the time the coachman, who had taken a more circuitous round, and moved slowly, gained the gate; and he perceived, as he approached, the two stout fellows, who, agreeably to the doctor's instructions, were there in waiting. The handkerchief which Mr. Fairfield had tied round his neck to protect his throat from the evening air, coming high above his chin, concealed in part his face; and his hat, flapped over his eyes, disguised

guised in the shade of a night that was only darkly illumined by a few scattered stars, the remaining part most effectually. As the carriage drew up to the gate, he moved towards the two men in attendance, and in the rough stern tone which doctor Acerbus was accustomed to employ, ordered them to take strict charge of the mad person within the chaise; and to be sure, in case he should cry out or resist, not to treat him too gently, but to cool his violence by a shower-bath under the pump, as he had that evening unfortunately drank too freely.

The men, in pursuance of these orders, approached the chaise, the door of which they instantly threw open; and perceiving the maniac, as they supposed, fast asleep, agreed to convey him gently, in this tranquil state, to the ward assigned him; by which they hoped to prevent all opposition on his part, or necessity for violence on theirs, in this removal. One of the men, therefore, having ascended the chaise,

chaise, shifted, with no small degree of difficulty, the still-sleeping doctor into the door; on the outside of which the other stood ready to receive his ponderous weight, that now, destitute of all centrifugal force, must otherwise, according to the rules of gravitation, have sought the centre.

This descent was not effected so gently but to rouse the doctor a little, who, feeling a something like constraint, shook himself, as would a dull horse in harness, with an effort to regain his liberty; the fumes, however, of the good old port that this learned son of *Æsculapius* had tossed off most freely, ascending to the upper regions of the brain, spread there a thick mist, which held his senses all bewildered. Supporting him on each side, the two men were about to bear him off, when, at the first movement, a sudden check on the tape which was suspended from his ear set him yelling, like a thievish cur caught in a hunter's snare, most fiercely.

“ Bear him away, man, and don't mind  
his

his howlings," cried one of his supporters to the other.

They moved forward a step, but the tape had caught on the spring which secured the door, and every movement they now made, gave so severe a pull to the suffering ear of the doctor, as roused him to a perfect sense of feeling. Instinct would have naturally directed the hand to the affected part, but in his first effort to raise it, he found this useful member and its fellow companion securely shackled. Roused to fury at such indignant treatment, he sought, by main force, to dissolve the tie which bound those twin brothers together, who, though apart, their mutual efforts serve each other, could in this constrained union effect nothing; but the first pull which he gave, acting with a reciprocal tug on the ear, caused him almost instantaneously to recede from the operation, and forced him, in loud cries, to express his too-feeling sense of such indignity.

The bandage, however, which Fanny  
had

had placed across his eyes, having in his first effort for liberty fallen over his mouth, not only obscured his sight, but stifled his breath as well as cries, and rendered him sensible of a sensation approaching to suffocation.

Thus held fast between two stout fellows, his hands secured, his sight darkened, and experiencing a suffocating oppression, as much perhaps from the excessive repletion of the full stomach, as from the interruption of free respiration, the doctor imagined he had passed the confines of this life, and in another existence had fallen into the hands of tormenting spirits. Full of this idea, and desirous to escape his tormentors, he collected, in one mighty effort, all his strength, and rearing high between the two men, sought, in a sudden bound, to escape them; but the tape, still fast on the spring of the door, and still pulling his now-bleeding and tortured ear, arrested more than even the firm gripe of his keepers his intended progress, and set him



him at once plunging, kicking, and roaring.

“Damn my soul, Jack,” said one of the men, “if this be not the greatest madman we ever had to do with! it is not cracked he is, but the devil himself that is in him.”

“Ay, by Jasus,” returned Jack, “he is as mad as Old Nick would be on seeing himself choused out of what he reckoned his own by the priest and holy water.”

“Cursed rascals! damned, abominable, murderous scoundrels!” exclaimed the doctor, who now began to imagine he had some faint knowledge of their voices, “do you want to tear the ear from my head? Let me go this instant, or I will have your lives for this treatment.”

“Let you go, indeed! Thank you, good friend, we know a trick worth two of that!” returned one.

“Doctor Acerbus would finely belabour us if we were such ninnies,” joined the other.

“Hell

“Hell and damnation! you knavish villains! am I not doctor Acerbus? Do you not know me?”

“Well! Lord have mercy on us! what it is to be mad! He thinks, Jack, he is now the doctor, as sure as I am living.”

“We will soon make him know the difference—we will learn him another story by and by, I warrant,” said Jack; “for we will *doctor him*. Come, away with him then, man, and let us not be all the night here dilly-dally.”

“Blood, zounds, and fury! is there no one to rescue me from the hands of these murderous rascals, who are either mad, or bent on my destruction?” vociferated the doctor, labouring with a plunge to force himself from their grasp, when a sudden and hard tug of the tape on his wounded ear, giving a new turn to his complaints, he roared out like a pig caught in a gate—  
“Oh, my ear! my ear is torn from my head, and no one will come to save me!”

“He

“He now forgets he is a doctor, or sure he might cure his own ear, if the devil himself did not get into it.”

“I will thrash the devil out of you, Jack Flaharty, when I get disengaged from these trammels,” replied the doctor, moving his head in his fury with such force as to shake off the bandage, and disengage at the same time the tape from the spring. “Are you not afraid of my vengeance? do you not know me?”

“How should I know you,” returned Jack, “but as the madman whom doctor Acerbus ordered Mich Mallowney and me to take care of? and on my conscience I believe you are not mad, but the very devil. Come, Mich, away with him!”

“Stop, villains! stop, scoundrels! on your life I charge you go no further. I am doctor Acerbus, and no other. Coachman, why don't you tell them I am the doctor?”

“Doctor Acerbus and the mad body were put into the chaise together at the castle,” answered the coachman, “and I

brought them here ; but in the dark, how am I to know the difference ? and besides, I could have sworn the doctor was there just now, giving orders to these men, and that he walked away just after."

"And so he did," cried they both in one breath together.

"You lie, you hell-fire knaves!—you lie, you damned villains ! I am the doctor."

"See, he is getting mad agin ! away with him to the pump, as the doctor ordered."

"Have patience, boys, till you bring a light, I would advise you," said the coachman.

"Patience with a man mad, indeed ! who would ever think of such a thing ? No, no, we must master him with force and violence, and cool him, as we would too stout whiskey, with water, lest he should overcome us."

The men dragged him off—the doctor resisted, roared most violently, and swore in the most furious manner ; while the coachman, after securing his horses, ran to  
the

the house to procure light, that by unfolding to clear view the supposed maniac, he might preserve him from all further violence.

Mr. Fairfield, after addressing the men, and giving the orders above recited, had marched off; but it was only to a few paces distance, where, under covert of the night, he stood enjoying the altercation that ensued between the doctor and the two fellows appointed to take charge of Fanny. Perfectly satisfied that the medical man should feel in part the treatment which he had, without proper deliberation, so freely prescribed for another, he thought not of interfering till they were about to drag him to the pump, when, disengaging himself from the great-coat, he mounted the horse with which his servant waited, and coming on in a full trot, as on his way home, drew up at the gate to inquire the cause of such uproar. Doctor Acerbus, recognizing Mr. Fairfield by the sound of his voice, called aloud on him to come and

save him from being murdered; and that gentleman dismounting from his horse, flew instantly across the court to his assistance, and came up with the men who held him fast, just as the coachman returned bearing in his hand a burning lamp from the hall, which threw at once full and overpowering light on the subject.

The doctor, smarting with pain and foaming with fury—his eyes darting fire, and his mouth vomiting vengeance and execration—his hands bound, and his ear streaming gore, formed at this moment such a strong contrast to the two men, of late so heroic, but now so confounded and amazed—so trembling and aghast, as to appear irresolute whether to keep their ground or fly, that Mr. Fairfield, while his eye wandered from one to the other, could only, with the utmost difficulty, restrain his risible faculties so as to prevent his laughing in the maimed and discomfited doctor's face most immoderately.

“God bless me! doctor Acerbus,” exclaimed

claimed the delighted man, with an expression of grave surprise, which the smile that played round his distended lips, and the comic humour that lurked in the corner of his eye, more than half contradicted — “God bless me, sir!” he repeated, with a strong effort to subdue the smile, and while he let fall the eyebrows with a mourning and compassionate gesture, “how came you in this pitable condition?”

“Ask these hell-fire assassins there,” replied the enraged doctor; “but unbind my hands, and you will see how I will pay the villains.”

“They appear more like persons escaped from assassination themselves than assassins,” said Mr. Fairfield, as the rays of the lamp fell on their pale and affrighted countenances, and while he unbound the doctor.

“It was the devil himself that deceived us in the doctor’s own shape, when he ordered us to take care of the madman in the chaise, and whom we thought all the time

we had in our clutches," said Jack Flaharty. "I would as soon have flung myself into the river, Mr. Fairfield, as so tampered with his honour; you will make him sensible of this, and pray him to forgive us the mistake."

"Some evil spirit has betrayed and led us on; as God may save me!" joined Mich Mallowney, "and as the coachman there can witness."

"Ay, the spirit of mischief, which is in you all to the backbone, and the devil, whose cubs you are; but did you not know my voice, you hypocritical rascals?" cried the doctor, running at Mallowney with his shut fist, with which he gave him a blow on the face that set him bleeding: "and you too, you villain!" he continued, leaping at the other, who, escaping the meditated blow, threw himself on his face, and roared out most manfully.

"I did, your honour," returned Jack Flaharty, as he still in a prostrate posture kept the ground; "I would have sworn to

to



to the voice, it was so rough and cross, when you ordered us to carry yourself, as it afterwards proved, to the pump, in case you should prove *refrackshus*; for your honour said as how the madman had drank a sup too much, and so it appeared to us when we waked you, as the coachman there can witness."

The doctor, somewhat appeased by the mediation of Mr. Fairfield, now questioned the coachman as to the disappearance of Fanny O'Grady, and, while he slept, his own transformation; on which the man made no difficulty in protesting, with strong and earnest asseveration, he was quite sure it was her he had in the chaise till the moment he brought the lamp, when he found, to his great surprise, it was his honour the doctor.

The vexation of the physician after this inquiry, and his fruitless search into the chaise and about the road for Fanny, took a new turn; and irritated and chagrined at losing in her a patient, from whose sup-

posed insanity he promised himself a fruitful harvest, he forgot even his resentment against his unconscious tormentors, and became quite insensible to Mr. Fairfield's sympathy and attention.

That gentleman attended him home, and having committed him to the care of his family, returned to Mrs. Harty's house, to enjoy with that lady and Fanny a repetition of the humorous scene which had just been acted.

CHAPTER VI.  
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The woe-foreboding voice she heard,  
And wishing, trembling, pray'd for morn.

JAMES SCOTT.

LADY Courteney, after having humanely secured, ~~as~~ she imagined, a quiet retreat for ~~Fanny~~ O'Grady, retired, as soon as doctor ~~Acerbus~~ Acerbus had departed with his patient, in great tranquillity to her own apartment. Moved to grateful devotion, as pious spirits usually are, at the successful attainment of any desired object, the lady continued on this night to an extraordinary length her religious exercises, and occasionally, in the overflowing of her devout heart, prayed audibly. To these sudden and occasional starts of audible devotion, a voice from above, deep, solemn, and full-toned, clear-breathed, and impressive,

G 5

sive,

sive, replied in these distinct terms—“*Sinful woman ! the hour of retribution is at hand, when not only the injured dead, but the oppressed living, shall obtain ample vengeance !*”

Appalled and horror-struck, every paralysed nerve refused, at this third dread warning to the affrighted devotee, their accustomed office; and overcome with deathlike terror and dismay, she sunk prostrate on her face to the floor. Here, transfixed with awe-inspiring dread to the spot, and scarce daring to breathe, she lay for a considerable time, each moment expecting a repetition of this solemn address, which had struck her with an awe more than human. All however remained still; no other words broke on her affrighted ear, or conveyed to her fainting heart their dreadful import; when gathering courage from this continued silence, she ventured at last to raise her head a little. Her scared and fixed eye cast a sullen glance around, but happily no avenging

avenging angel, with his flaming sword; filled, as she trembling apprehended, the unoccupied extent of the apartment; her heart at this unhopèd-for respite felt somewhat relieved, and she began to breathe more freely.

It was, however, only with trembling knees and tottering steps she retreated from the closet, and gained her apartment, when ringing for her attendant, she complained of sudden indisposition, and demanded a cordial. Kitty, who perceived lady Courteney pale, faint, and trembling, instantly procured one which she always kept at hand in an adjoining cabinet, and which, of most potent efficacy, she scarce ever knew to fail in reviving her lady's languid spirits. But whether the lady now felt more deeply affected than on similar occasions, or that she had not swallowed a sufficient quantity of this soul-reviving cordial, it failed of its usual effect in raising her spirits, which appeared to labour under a depression that nothing

G 6

could

could remove. Plunged in silence and abstraction, her mind revolved (it might be conjectured from the deep sighs that at short intervals burst from her oppressed heart) some painful idea, while she passively suffered her attendant to undress her. The soothing attentions of the obsequious Kitty were all bestowed in vain; her efforts at consolation were employed to no purpose; the lady, only studious to enjoy her own thoughts, motioned her away with her hand as soon as she had reposed her head on her pillow, where giving freedom to disquieting reflections, she ruminated at leisure the past terrific occurrence.

As the fearful visions of an affrighted fancy faded from lady Courteney's mind, it began to resume the exercise of its more vigorous faculties; and she felt half inclined to think, that the voice which sounded so dreadful in her ear must have rose from the chaos of inbred horrors in her own breast, and been the offspring of a troubled

troubled conscience. But from whence, she again thought, could these troubles arise, or what in her could disturb the peace of a pure conscience? Of the happy few whom her creed of exclusion taught her to believe the *elect*, and arrived at such high degree of perfection as to be long privileged from error, of what could she be guilty? Her actions, guided by the Divine Spirit, could not partake of evil; nor her will, acted on by an inevitable necessity, render her liable to the trespass of fallen and fallible human nature: thus then led on, as she erroneously imagined, by the impulse of the Holy Spirit, the pious devotee lived in peaceful security on earth, and expected at death beatification; no troubles therefore of a disquieted conscience could prey on her calm mind, or produce there any terrific illusions of the fancy.

From cool dispassionate reasoning of this nature, lady Courteney, who possessed a strong mind, was inclined at length to suppose

suppose the alarming voice which she had heard was nothing more than the trick of some concealed enemy ; and that this enemy was Fanny O'Grady, her own implacable dislike to that woman made her entertain no question. No other of the household, she well knew, possessed ingenuity to devise such a plot, or could have the same interest in the consequences it might produce ; she must then have been the secret spring, lady Courteney conjectured, which set some meaner agent at work, and who, in her absence, but under her artful directions, was instructed to turn her ladyship's piety, of which the unbelieving Fanny made a frequent jest, to the malevolent purpose of internal disquietude and self-torment.

Such deliberate malice on the part of Fanny (and of which mere conjecture alone, in the opinion of lady Courteney, was more than presumptive proof) rendered her worthy of punishment, and which the lady's rigorous sense of justice determined



mined her to inflict. In contriving therefore what this punishment should be, and useless conjecture respecting the person who might have been her assistant, the night, the season of calm rest, was consumed, and the morning dawned on lady Courteney's yet wakeful vigils.

Mr. Fairfield, having his thoughts still occupied and amused by the last night's adventure, was in town early; and apprehensive the vindictive temper of doctor Acerbus might urge him to seek revenge, he called on Mrs. O'Grady to caution her against such consequences. Aware that no consideration would more tend to keep him quiet, than the fear of bringing his opinion into disrepute, by admitting how much he was imposed on, Mr. Fairfield recommended Fanny to observe a profound silence on the subject, and let the matter only transpire from the doctor himself, who would not, as he rightly conjectured, be over solicitous to present it to the public attention.

From the dwelling of Mrs. Harty, Mr.  
Fairfield

Fairfield proceeded direct to the house of doctor Acerbus, where he called to inquire how that gentleman found himself after his late misadventure. Smarting under corporal pain, yet suffering a still keener wound from bitter disappointment, the doctor, after having exhausted his first fury in execrations and complaints, was sullen and gloomy, and replied only in a most ungracious tone to Mr. Fairfield's friendly inquiries.

"That was a devilish mistake, and one that you should not covet to occur again," said that gentleman, "in these two huge fellows, who played so dexterously the part of your tormentors, and with whom I should not wonder if you would be seriously angry : yet, after all, my good friend, the wisest act on your part will be to take no notice of the matter."

"And why not, sir?" demanded the impatient doctor. "Do you imagine I will tamely endure the pain and insult I have suffered?"

"These

“ These two men,” resumed Mr. Fairfield, “ so far from being conscious of injuring or offending you, were only performing, as they imagined, the commands you enjoined them: to punish them therefore would be to act inconsistent with justice, and render your commands in future of no value; and as for Mrs. O’Grady, who, without being mad, has certainly played you this mad prank, she imagines she has done no more than return you in kind the favour you intended her: of her then say not a word; for sound in mind, as I can fully testify, from the conversation I have just had with her (of which more by and by), the world will say, if you arraign her act, she only played the *doctor*, and found in you a proper patient to exercise her skill on. Let *mum* therefore be the word, if you are not prepared to be laughed at.”

“ The world, Mr. Fairfield, may laugh at me, but I will positively be revenged for what O’Grady made me suffer.”

“ In

“In this respect, doctor, she seems resolved to anticipate you, and with that view has sent for me this morning, to instruct her how she is to take proceedings against you, for the unjust and forcible detention of her person.”

“She cannot, sir: she was consigned to my care by lady Courteney, as a person quite insane, and her actions proved her insanity.”

“I believe not: for the devilish good trick she played you, doctor, proved more fully the absence of reason in yourself than in Mrs. O’Grady. Be advised, therefore, and instead of seeking revenge, meet her, in order to hush the matter up, on the grounds of peace and conciliation. As a mutual friend (and knowing, between ourselves, the story will not tell to your advantage), I am desirous of propitiating goodwill between you, and with that intent have already tried to dissuade Mrs. O’Grady from a prosecution.”

“I will not meet the virago, sir, with  
either

either conciliation or goodwill, but as an open and avowed enemy," cried the doctor, with warmth.

"She appears equally willing to be at you, and in that case I will not dissuade her against it; so to it, my hero, in good earnest, and see what will be the result!" said Mr. Fairfield. "She may, doctor, in her medical capacity, give you a pill you will find hard to swallow, or at least of damned bitter digestion, for your dispute with her will prove a trial of intellectual—ay, man, of physical skill, that shall afford much merriment to the county, and of which the issue shall be an absolute proof of defect of judgment in yourself, if you establish not the privation of reason on your opponent."

The doctor was about to reply in anger, but interrupting himself, as he felt the force of this observation, with a constrained cough he stopped suddenly short, then walked about the room in evident discomposure.

"Fame,

“Fame, my dear sir,” resumed Mr. Fairfield, “is a good that is most precarious and uncertain; for let the tide of public opinion once run against a man, he falls with greater precipitation than ever he rose into estimation. Professional men, therefore, who depend for support on the suffrage of the people, should be careful to avoid all conjunctures that may turn the public voice against them, or lower them in the public favour; for interrupt but once the swelling current of their prosperity, it sinks into a stagnant state, to which the most prosperous gales shall scarce give a successful flow in future.”

There needed not much argument to convince the doctor of the truth of this observation, which now struck him so forcibly, that he felt heartily ashamed of, and desirous to recant the opinion he had pronounced on Fanny O'Grady; and though bursting with secret rancour against that enterprising woman, appeared willing to suppress his rage, and forego his  
desire

desire of revenge, on Mr. Fairfield's engaging to keep the rest of the party silent, so as to let the affair sink into total oblivion. Fanny, Mr. Fairfield knew, satisfied with her merry and innocent revenge, would be willing to enjoy it in secret, and not expose by its publicity the doctor to general ridicule; and the two men, in terror of his power, and depending on his favour for profitable employment, could have no wish of making the affair public; he made therefore no difficulty in pledging himself that the past night's adventure should remain a profound secret: but delighting in his jest, Mr. Fairfield could not forbear his accustomed railleries on the part which the doctor himself had taken in the business.

The asperities of the surgeon's gruff nature were roused at these railleries, yet requiring, as he clearly perceived, the good offices of Mr. Fairfield, he did violence to his natural rough temper to restrain it, and only evinced his displeasure in his evident impatience

patience to get rid of that gentleman, to whom he more than once signified the necessity he was under of giving immediate attendance to a sick patient.

“Is he mad?” inquired the magistrate.

“Raging mad in a high fever,” returned the doctor, endeavouring to parry his inference with a constrained smile.

“Away then to him in all haste!” rejoined the other; “for the infallibility of your judgment in all mad cases shall render your prescription of potent efficacy.”

Doctor Acerbus replied not, but bit his lips with vexation, and Mr. Fairfield, taking his hat, wished him a good morning, when seeming to recollect himself, and returning again from the door, he said in a whisper, with an air of great gravity—“If the patient be *mad* and wants sobering, be sure you send for Mrs. O’Grady to tie him.”

Far, however, from being pleased at the passive spirit with which the pusillanimous baronet witnessed the indignity that had been offered herself, and deeply chagrined  
at



at the little success of her earnest entreaty respecting his daughter, Fanny determined to forbear all further application to, or future intercourse with, so despicable a person, and resolved to seek henceforth support from the exertions of her own industry, rather than owe it to the bounty of a man whom she contemned so heartily.

Pursuant to this spirited determination, Fanny, after writing to Mrs. Blandford an account of her ill success with her father, arranged her affairs so as to be ready to depart for Dublin the following morning, when a letter from sir Richard Courteney, appeasing in some measure her irritated feelings, by the promise which it held forth of a reconciliation with his daughter, induced her to defer for the present her intended journey. The letter was to the following effect :—

---

*To*

*" To Mrs. O'Grady.*

" MY DEAR FANNY,

" I was both grieved and offended that you should have been treated so disrespectfully as you were at the castle; but my voice, as you may already know, proving of no avail against the opinion of lady Courteney and doctor Acerbus, I hope you will not condemn me as having any hand in the business.

" The more I reflect on what you have told me respecting my poor Geraldine, whom I love as tenderly as ever, though she had the misfortune to offend me, the more I am uneasy at her present dangerous situation, and afflicted that you should have left her. I would wish to commune with you on this subject, and also that between us we might devise some means of having you restored to my daughter; but as seeing you is out of the question for the present, I desire, for the sake of Geraldine, whom you so affectionately love, that you would remain where you are

are till I can have an interview with you, in order that we may contrive together some means of making my poor girl less unhappy. It shall not be long till I seek an opportunity of seeing you, and do not in the mean time permit your resentment at my conduct to outweigh your regard for my daughter's interest.

“ I am, dear Fanny, your true friend and sincere well-wisher,

“ RICHARD COURTENAY.”

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Though this letter was far from being as explicit as Fanny could wish, yet as giving earnest of a speedy reconciliation of the baronet to his daughter, and of her own reunion with the latter, it was highly acceptable to this affectionate woman, and determined her at once, without a shadow of hesitation on her part, to await sir Richard's leisure.

Near a week, however, passed away in anxious solicitude and fruitless expecta-

tion of further information from sir Richard, during which time of painful suspense Fanny forbore to write to Mrs. Blandford, for fear of encouraging, in the fervid heart of that too-sanguine young lady, a hope which the pusillanimous spirit and irresolute temper of her father might snatch from her eager grasp before it was half ripe for fruition.

The natural impetuosity of Fanny rendered her extremely impatient of this delay, and set her to contrive on her own part an interview with sir Richard (whom some trivial circumstance, she feared, might have since turned aside from his intended project), when the following short billet was brought her.

---

*“ To Mrs. O’Grady.*

“ MY DEAR FANNY,

“ I have every thing arranged for your departure to join Geraldine, but it must be a secret for the present. Meet  
me

me this evening between seven and eight o'clock (when lady Courteney shall be entertained with a learned preacher), in the long avenue of limes that lead down to the river, where you shall learn my plan, and be instructed how you are to execute it.

“Yours truly,  
“RICHARD COURTENAY.”

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The moment of appointment was nearly arrived at the time some stranger, who stopped not for reply, left this billet at the house of Mrs. Harty; and Fanny, in eager haste to give sir Richard the desired interview, set out without a moment's deliberation or delay to the place of meeting.

## CHAPTER VII.



The keenest pangs the wretched find  
 Are rapture to the dreary void,  
 The leafless desert of the mind,  
 The waste of feelings unemployed.

LORD BYRON.



Yet cannot wisdom stamp our joys complete ;  
 'Tis conscious virtue crowns the bless'd retreat.  
 Who feels not that, the private path must shun,  
 And fly to public view to escape his own ;  
 In life's gay scenes uneasy thoughts suppress,  
 And lull each anxious care in dreams of peace.

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

MONTHS now flowed rapidly on with Mrs. Blandford at Paris, passed in a continual career of such brilliant and delightful entertainments, that the displeasure of her father, and the absence of her friend, were alike forgotten. From the latter she had  
 heard

heard only twice, and that a short time after their painful separation; and of the former, but through the medium of Fanny, the chief burthen of whose intelligence was the continued relentless disposition of the baronet. This unrelenting spirit in her father occasionally grieved—this silence in Fanny betimes amazed her, and would no doubt have produced lasting disquietude and alarm, if, amidst the enchanting pleasures she was now called on to enjoy, there was leisure for either; but plunging in thoughtless gaiety (after the example of her dissipated husband) from one scene of amusement to another, no space was left void for sober reflection—no link of pleasure's glittering chain broken or unconnected.

The affection in major Blandford, which appeared to revive with increasing tenderness for his wife after Fanny's removal, did not long survive their arrival in Paris, and introduction into the gay society of that crowded city. Here his passion for

play superseded that of love, and gaming became so much the mistress of his most ardent desires, the chief object of his adoring idolatry, that the lovely Geraldine and her attractions were thought of no more; and it was only rarely, except at dinner, that she and her now-negligent husband met in the same parties.

Geraldine, at first deeply wounded by, then indignant of, this neglect, gave way by turns to tears of tender complaint, and to strong resentment; but without a steady friend to advise or occupy her warm feelings—without virtuous companion on whom to fix her affection, or who might innocently cheer her hours of solitude, she entertained dangles and triflers at home, and abroad was in pursuit of continual amusement.

Among the former no one discovered greater perseverance or assiduity in his devoirs than the marquis of Waramour: he seemed to enter with the most friendly interest into all her tender grievances, springing



springing from domestic dissatisfaction, and disappointment in connubial affection; he soothed with gentle sympathy her fond regret, or inflamed, with reciprocal anger, on his own part, her vehement resentment. In private he wound himself by artful insinuation into her confidence—in public was her constant attendant; and so necessary did he seem, by these little tender attentions—this confidential intercourse and reciprocity of feeling, to her happiness, that the time, to his warm fancy, did not appear far remote, when he might claim with success the reward of such faithful and affectionate assiduities.

The haughty insolence of a proud rival seemed even at this period as if it would anticipate the moment, and give, through pique and impatience of revenge, the desired object to his eager wishes. Lady Castlegloss, who had exclusively enjoyed for several months the devoted attention of the gallant and amorous marquis, could not behold, without strong and unequivocal

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 to strong *of* the world supplied, to hum-  
 friend to *portify* our gentle and too-suscep-  
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 action and offended pride, into a fatal  
 madness to the dangers of her situation,  
 Mrs Blandford tottered on the very verge of  
 precipice, down whose destructive height  
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THE FATALISTS.  
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tears which, on its reperusal, she shed, bore  
witness how severely she felt her complete  
separation from every kindred tie and so-  
cial affection. She admitted this idea  
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till awakening recollection bade her re-  
member that it was to her own fatal indis-

symptoms of spite and indignation, his admiration directed to another, with whose native attractions and juvenile charms her matured and studied graces could (she felt compelled, in defiance of self-love, to acknowledge) stand no competition. This lady bore the marquis's defection with ill-suppressed fury, and enduring rivalry only with insolent and overweening haughtiness, took every occasion which her superior rank, more advanced years, and greater knowledge of the world supplied, to humble and mortify our gentle and too-susceptible heroine, who, in a spirit of vindictive reprisal, retorted on the jealous baroness, in the point where she was most accessible, by the evident encouragement she gave the marquis of Waramour's gallant attentions.

Thus lulled, equally through wounded affection and offended pride, into a fatal blindness to the dangers of her situation, Mrs. Blandford tottered on the very verge of a precipice, down whose destructive height  
persons

persons of senior years and more consummate prudence have not unfrequently been plunged, when a letter from captain Plunket, of whom she had scarce heard since her union with major Blandford, awakened in her mind some pleasant, yet painful recollections of the innocent amusements of happy childhood, and the endearments of kindred affection. 'This letter, not such as she was formerly wont to receive from Charles, was cold, formal, and ceremonious—merely expressive of a few complimentary inquiries concerning herself, and a wish to be informed where he could see Fanny. Geraldine was deeply hurt at the distant style and reserved tenor of this polite, but careless billet; and the tears which, on its perusal, she shed, bore witness how severely she felt her complete separation from every kindred tie and social affection. She admitted this idea with a feeling bordering on resentment, till awakening recollection bade her remember that it was to her own fatal indis-

cretion she owed her friend's desertion; and then, aroused as it were from a feverish dream, she thought with regret on the volatility of her present conduct—her culpable forgetfulness of her once-happy home and childhood companions, and the thoughtless vivacity in which she was now running a continual round of amusements, insensible of her father's neglect, and indifferent to his just anger.

Even Fanny (who generously pardoning her imprudent flight and indiscreet marriage, and in her partial kindness to her loved pupil triumphing over what had long been the favourite wish of her warm heart, had clung with unabating affection to her in her changed state, as long as she was permitted to remain)—even this kind maternal friend she had, in the delirium of her present joys, ceased to remember, and her constrained absence and unaccountable silence were alike forgotten.

Ashamed of her wilful inattention to a friend so justly dear, and who was now  
perhaps

perhaps suffering from her over-zeal in her service, Geraldine felt suddenly alarmed for Fanny, and at a loss to reply respecting captain Plunket's inquiries, which must have been produced, she supposed (for he at least was never unmindful of his maternal friend), by some painful uncertainty concerning that dear woman. It was therefore only after considerable hesitation, caused by conscious shame and much severe self-condemnation, that Geraldine summed up courage to answer Plunket's letter, which she at length essayed to do, by detailing the precise time of Fanny's leaving her in London, and the dates of the letters which she had since received from her after she arrived in Ireland; but to which trivial information she was constrained to add her entire ignorance of what caused her long silence, whether she had since changed her situation, or what might be her present residence. In conclusion, she warmly expressed her impatience and anxiety to hear from or con-

cerning this valued friend, and entreated he would call and give her whatever information relative to her he might be in possession of.

To this letter nothing more than a cold complimentary card was returned, expressive of his regret at his inability to supply Mrs. Blandford with the desired information relative to Fanny, and pleading, in apology for declining her invitation, an indispensable necessity of revisiting Ireland, which would admit of no delay.

Again were the tenderest affections of Geraldine's softened heart cruelly wounded by the evident disregard of Plunket, whose expedition to Ireland, however urgent it might be, could suffer no material retardation from his calling to see her, and learning from her own lips if she had any commands thither. "How are the affections of early youth, so warm and so ingenuous, glowing with such fervour in my bosom, and remembered with such pleasure, forgotten, or disregarded by Charles!"



Charles!" thought Geraldine, as a tear strayed down her less blooming cheek, from her pensive blue eye, to the bitter recollection. "The day was, Plunket—but gone by, alas! for ever!—when you would not thus coldly have met the wishes of the then happy Geraldine, or fled her entreaty; but disfavour is contagious misfortune, and to have forfeited my father's countenance and protection, is enough to shake the affection of my best friends."

This reflection was followed by a plentiful flow of tears, and for several minutes the usual gay visitors and enchanting parties were forgotten; nay, so sensible was Geraldine's distress at Plunket's neglect, that it unconsciously called forth in her breast respondent feelings on her own inattention with regard to Fanny, whose last letter had now remained, through the oblivion produced by the intoxicating delights of which Mrs. Blandford's present life was a continual pursuit, three whole months unanswered.

Reproaching

Reproaching herself with this unkind neglect, to which might probably be owing her friend's continued silence, our repentant heroine called for her writing-desk, and taking a sheet of paper, commenced a letter; but the difficulty of making out a proper apology for not having written sooner, caused an embarrassing delay, and Geraldine, whose thoughts in epistolary correspondence were wont to flow more rapid than her pen, now felt at a loss to complete the first period.

At this critical moment of troublesome perplexity, Mrs. Oldenrig (a particular friend, and one whose dulcet words gave peculiar harmony to every trifling sentence, however destitute of the solidity of truth or good sense, that tinkled in the pleased ear) was announced; and Mrs. Blandford, delighted with any excuse to desist from her reluctant employment, threw down her pen, and never, as I am credibly informed, resumed it to finish the letter: for to the ample discussion of beaux, dress, and

and the last evening party, succeeded other visitors and other conversation, whose lofty panegyrical strain elevated the raptured fancy above the sober consideration of absent, plain-speaking friends, and whose radiant flashes of wit so dazzled the warmed imagination, as to obliterate from it every trace of such modest and unobtrusive personages.

Geraldine, whose vanity was no doubt piqued at the disregard and careless indifference to her request of seeing him, manifested by Plunket, could not so easily lose her present recollection of him; she was therefore sedulous in her inquiries among the English officers, as to where her heroic kinsman had been, or on what military duty employed for the last six months; nor was her interest lessened, though her anger was quite dispelled, when she learned that he had lain a great part of the time, hopeless of recovery, at 'Toulouse, and that even after joining his regiment at Paris, he was obliged to retire to Marly, in  
pure

pure air and tranquil repose to seek the necessary renovation his impaired health required.

This information forced again on Geraldine's repulsive thoughts renewed self-upbraidings, grievously mortifying indeed to a heart long inflated with adulatory stuff, but which she felt it impossible at this moment of soft compunction to resist. She thought then with humiliating remorse on her strange forgetfulness of the companion of her childhood—the tender friend of her dawning youth—the only surviving kinsman of a respected mother; and she felt astonished how the pleasures in which she was engaged, could have occupied her to such criminal degree as to extinguish in her heart all natural affection, and leave her, exulting in health and gaiety, ignorant of, and indifferent to, the wasting decline of the noble youth, who, not less than herself, was beloved of her mother.

Though reason was bewildered in this  
whirl

whirl of pleasure, and social feeling was certainly deadened or obscured, yet the one was not wholly darkened in the mind of Geraldine, nor the other in her heart quite extinct; but neglected of a husband whom in return she despised, and separated from every friendly and kindred tie, there was no play for affection; and without steady friend to guide her erring steps, she was environed with sycophants and adulators, ready to turn the best feelings of her frank, warm, and unguarded nature, to the overthrow of her honour, and the destruction of her moral principles. Thus immersed in pleasure, and thus surrounded, is it to be wondered that, young and thoughtless—seeking amusement for the present hour, and not thinking of the future, our fair heroine was plunged in a delirium of joy, in which kindred and home, the playful companion of innocent childhood, and the friends of her ripened youth, were forgotten?

Geraldine had now, however, frequent  
recurrence

recurrence of her thoughts to absent friends, and occasional serious reflections on the unprofitableness of the life she was leading: these reflections excited correspondent resolutions to remain more at home, and in the privacy of her closet dedicate more of her time to study and mental improvement. These thoughts produced also a half-formed purpose to write without delay to her father or maternal friend, but still, in the bustle of preparing for some approaching entertainment, this, like other good intentions, was again omitted; and the omission she reconciled to herself, the first reproving moment that followed, by thinking that it would be time enough to write when Plunket (whose leave of absence she understood did not exceed six weeks) should be returned, and that she heard from him where Fanny was to be found, or how sir Richard and lady Courteney would be disposed, against or in her favour.

A grand masquerade soon after gave  
new

new employment to her thoughts; and who, engaged in the important work of preparing for such entertainment, could bestow on other matter serious attention?





## CHAPTER VIII.



“Is this then—is this the way  
To free man’s spirit from the deadening sway  
Of worldly sloth?”

.....

And then the place, that bright unholy place,  
Where vice lay hid beneath each winning grace  
And charm of luxury, as the viper weaves  
Its wily covering of sweet balsam leaves.      MOORE.

Mrs. Oldenrig accompanied Geraldine to the masquerade. That lady chose the habit of a nun, on which she was immovably fixed, notwithstanding all our lively heroine could urge to the contrary, who, in the proud exhilaration of her buoyant spirits, would rather they should have assumed characters whose appropriate display might call forth spirit and vivacity. Determined, however, not to shroud under

der the monastic habit (to which, or the seclusion of a nunnery, Geraldine had no great predilection) the lively images afloat in her imagination for the sport of the evening, she declined the nun's black veil, and put on the habit of a novice, as being equally suited to the assumed character of her companion, and certainly more congenial to her own.

Mrs. Blandford (though in the exuberant gaiety of her heart prepared to encounter with characteristic spirit whoever should address her, and enjoy with cheerful humour the freedom and merriment of the place) was struck dumb at first, lost in gazing wonder, on contemplating the splendour of the decorations and the brilliancy of the scene. Through variegated lamps, suspended in clusters from the lofty ceilings, streamed innumerable rays; reflected again from brilliant lustres, or refracted at different points by other objects, these rays diverged into new lines, till, uniting over head, they gave, in a flood of  
clear

clear unencumbered light, to the gloom of night all the brightness of meridian day. Festoons of artificial flowers, fancifully dispersed through the rich hangings and tasteful draperies, and with which also the walls of the apartments were luxuriantly decorated, presented to the delighted eye all the fresh, splendid, and varied tints of the flowery parterre in summer; while the aromatic sweets with which the ambient air was perfumed, rendered the delusion still stronger. Music too lent its aid to complete the fascination of the scene: strains of the most delightful harmony, by turns sweet and by turns lofty, melted the impassioned soul to ecstasy, or elevated the spirits to a gladdening joy, which the fantastic groups there assembled boldly encouraged each other in maddening mirth to partake.

While Mrs. Blandford was bestowing her admiration on this gay scene and these mirthful groups, she became herself in turn the object of general admiration. Nothing  
could

could have displayed to greater advantage the fine symmetry of her perfect form, than the elegant simplicity of her attire. Innumerable modes of dress, from the earliest times to the present, have been contrived for the useful purpose of hiding personal defects; but where the figure has been moulded by the hand of nature, with a roundness and fair proportion that might vie with the finest models of Grecian art, the simpler the habit in which it is enveloped, the more its natural beauty shall appear. Such was now the case with our lovely heroine, who, followed with admiration, and addressed with encomiums by a variety of strange and grotesque figures, could almost fancy the tales of the nursery realized, and that she trod on fairy land.

Mrs. Oldenrig, whether desirous to see whatever was to be seen, or in pursuit of some person whom she expected to meet, hurried Geraldine through the thronged and brilliant rooms, without permitting more lengthened conversation with the  
different

persons by whom she was constantly addressed than a smart retort, followed again perhaps by a brief rejoinder. This indefatigable lady rested at length from her perambulation of the apartments, and while a monk engaged Geraldine's ear, she quitted her for a moment, first charging her not to stir, for fear of losing one another in the crowd, till she should return.

The monk, most elaborately expatiating on the calm content and pure pleasures of the monastic life, recommended the novice to put herself under his holy care, and fly from such dangerous scenes and the world's temptations.

"I have some idea, reverend father," replied Geraldine, with great vivacity, "of the happiness you so eloquently portray as being found in the retirement of a monastic life, and I would fain aspire to its enjoyment; but as I feel the soul to be infinite—curious in its research of knowledge—inexhaustible in its desires, and shrinking from nothing so much as the  
dull

dull tædium of time unemployed, it is necessary, if I take you for guide, you should supply me with resources, when prayer would fail, and contemplation should cease to elevate, to fill up the vast blanks in a retired life, that in the female world here are so delightfully occupied between projects of future conquest, and the tyranny of present empire.”

“ It shall be the study of my life, fair lady, to make you sensible of the dangers of the world, and the happiness of a nun in retirement.”

“ There is no danger, father, I would not sooner encounter than this dull repetition of the same thing, or the stupid horrors of *ennui*. By conflicts in the world we acquire spirit and energy, but in retirement we sink beneath the benumbing pressure of continual ease without a struggle. If you are desirous therefore of making me value retirement, you must begin by giving constant employment to my thoughts—you must lead me through the region

spirits, and introduce me to immaterial beings. Are you skilled in metaphysics?"

"To others of the holy fraternity I leave the study of physic—mine is to instruct and confess the young and beautiful."

"You know not then, I perceive," answered the novice, with an expression of contempt, "that sublime science which, elevating the soul above her corporal companion, lends her wings to soar to the regions of immortality, and supplies her food for eternity in the contemplation of ethereal essence."

"I know only that you are bewitchingly lovely, that I wish to make of you my Madona, and that I will worship you for ever!"

"Begone!—thou art an impostor, desirous to lead a simple novice astray. Oh that there was here an Inquisition to take thee of thy ignorance! with what stock would it have to charge

"No,

“ No, a monk, lady, a holy monk, who is impatient to receive your vows, and crown you with felicity.”

“ A very mendicant truly, who has need to beg a little brains to perform his part for one night only ! and as charity no doubt shall prompt all here to bestow their mite in a little sage advice, mine is, poor man ! that you instantly retire, change your monk’s cowl for a sweep’s cap, and your black habit for his sooty mantle ; then, at your return, another good body may teach you to cry sweep ! sweep ! which exordium shall better suit the compass of your intellects than an exhortation to a life of contemplation, prayer, and study—subjects that you seem not to understand, and to which I should suppose you reluctant to give your attention.”

The monk slunk away, not much pleased with his little success, and still less with the laugh it produced at his expence.

Geraldine now turned her eye towards the door in search of Mrs. Oldenrig ; she



perceived not her, but a figure reclining against it, which irresistibly caught and fixed her attention. This person, whose form was noble and commanding, and his present attitude graceful, was dressed in the grave habit of a philosopher, and seemed like one regarding with a contemplative eye the frolicsome crowds as they passed on, and not expected to open his lips, but to make strictures on their follies. And what a scene was here for the philosophic eye, in inquiring view, to gaze at!—what a scene for the philosophic mind, in meditative mood, to dwell on! Not the realities over which brightening Truth sheds her divine light, and calm Reason investigates with pleasure, but the splendid visions which Art tricks out to charm the deluded senses, and through which Pleasure's blind votaries march merrily on to the sound of entrancing music, without once perceiving, in the brilliant vista before them, the pain and satiety that close the prospect.

The

The serious air of the mask which this person had assumed, and his state of silent abstraction, so different from the ludicrous pleasantry and sportive merriment of others, might have been the very circumstance which rivetted Geraldine's attention. Rivetted, however, it was, and she continued to regard him with fixed observance, till a haughty Turk approaching, put forward his claim for notice, by saying —“ Thou wert right, fair creature, to dismiss that gloomy monk from thy presence, for charms such as thine were never given thee to be immured in a cloister; but come with me, where thou shalt be surrounded with eastern splendour, and sated with eastern delights—where, reposing in luxurious ease on cushions of velvet, and attended only by beauteous Circassians, thou shalt reign the favourite sultana of the harem.”

“ And where I should certainly experience a captivity more grievous than that  
I 8 of

of a cloister," answered the novice, who was far from being pleased with an interruption that withdrew her attention from the philosopher, who had now leisurely advanced a few steps into the room, and whose majestic figure she still continued to observe with increasing curiosity. "A convent might indeed immure my body, but you, proud Turk, would also hope to hold enslaved my mind; and as no bondage appears to me more dangerous or degrading than the captivation of the senses, I will fly your invitation, as destructive of intellect as of liberty, and to a rational being of most pernicious effect."

"Do not, lovely creature, prove such an enemy to your own happiness as to despise the lucky invitation that I give, and which, recommending the inebriation of the senses in present ineffable delights, regards the future as uncertain, or at least remote."

The philosopher having advanced, appeared to listen with an action of surprise  
and

and detestation to the Turk as he spoke ; then turned with impatience towards the novice, as if expecting her reply.

She answered with promptitude and spirit—" I perceive now, mighty Turk, I need not shun you : for novice as I am, you can have no power to harm me. Seduction may indeed sometimes lie hid under the refined subtleties of flowing eloquence or sprightly wit ; but your counsel, sir, has too much of coarse glare to do any thing more than surprise." The novice turned from him with disdain, the philosopher was following, when a skipping dancing-master seizing him, as he passed on in anxious haste, by the hands, to take a waltz, exclaimed—" *Le pauvre philosophe s'est perdu ; mais venez, monsieur sage, dans les sauts de la danse vous vous rouverez vous-même.*"

" *Oui, monsieur Frivole,*" replied the philosopher, hastily, and evidently provoked at being stopped in his career, "*si*

ma raison n'étoit point à ma tête, mais à mes talons, comme vous."

While the philosopher was uttering these few words, he disengaged himself, and then, with a sling of his nervous arm, whirled the dancing-master off in a flying curvet of greater velocity than his most sprightly dance. This philosophic repulse to his merry attack turned the laugh completely against the votary of Terpsichore, who with difficulty kept good the floor, or recovered the steadiness of his feet, while the philosopher employed his in a renewed movement towards the novice.

Mrs. Oldenrig returned, and with her appeared a sylvan nymph, with whom she was engaged in conversation; the latter turned to the philosopher, as he was about to address Geraldine, and catching him by the arm, thus commenced her encounter—"It is not here, friend, in this giddy vortex of pleasure, you shall meet the good you seek; come with me to rural shades, and there in contentment shall you find it."

The

The philosopher, not possessing sufficient gallantry to meet this inviting address, returned—"A life of indolence would ill suit the purposes for which I have been sent into the world, since my good is not comprised in ease, but in active exertions—not so with you, fair nymph, who may find in active life the greatest danger: take then the caution of a friend, and return to your peaceful shades, from whence nothing but a woman's idle curiosity could have drawn you."

"I came," answered the nymph, "not urged by an idle curiosity to behold pleasures of which I could form no idea, nor yet wearied with retirement, nor disgusted; but attracted by the fame of your wisdom, I was drawn hither to hear sage lectures from your lips, and be benefited by your instructions."

"Your best security then, I tell you, gentle nymph," answered the philosopher, disengaging her hand from his arm, "shall be found in solitude, and your untaught simplicity;

simplicity; for yours, I perceive from the ardour of your grasp, is not a constitution to bear the *tender* conflicts of life unendangered. That pursuit of knowledge, not prompted by a love of wisdom, but which curiosity excites, is always hazardous; shun it, return to your native shades, and there study to know yourself."

As the philosopher concluded this sentence, anxious to drop all further conversation with this sylvan dame, and engage the novice, on whom his eye was still fixed, he let go the former's hand, and escaped her further importunity in the gathering crowd; yet when he approached, and found himself at liberty to engage our heroine's attention, an excessive emotion, trembling through his frame, and ill-concealed by his mask, appeared to suspend the movement of his tongue, and render him unable to address her. Mrs. Oldenrig had again disappeared, and a crowd of triflers now environed the novice, all emulous to sport some silly question, or what they might

might consider witty remark, but to which she, on her part, replied with appropriate humour and spirit.

Among the rest appeared an astrologer, with a telescope in his hand, which he declared could carry the eye beyond the region of the remotest stars; and whose dress, emblematic of his profession, was composed of a loose long gown of celestial blue stuff, confined by a girdle, on which were the twelve signs of the zodiac, with a cap of the colour of the milky way, studded with stars. This person, drawing near to Mrs. Blandford, in an under-tone thus addressed her—"I have been studying your horoscope, fair novice, and find most exquisite felicity in store for you; let us withdraw then from this idle crowd, that I may announce to you your happy destiny."

"My destiny, sir, once gay and vivid as the premature bud of an early spring, and like it delusive also, deceived me—I will trust to it no more; but now, like the airy butterfly, fluttering in sunshine, and



sporting in the enjoyment of present, though short-lived pleasure, I will enjoy the happy moment as it comes, and not seek the future by anticipation."

The philosopher, whose eyes (gleaming through his mask) were bent sadly on Geraldine, sighed involuntarily, as if he thought this fanciful picture, drawn by the novice, bore too strong an analogy to her real situation; Mrs. Blandford, regarding him attentively, responded his sigh.

"You are most assuredly wrong, fair novice," answered the astrologer, who, aware perhaps of our heroine's faith in an overruling destiny, had assumed this character, to gain her attention more readily. "It is wise to penetrate futurity, when to foresee may in some cases avert a fatal destiny. For though I find, on examining the configuration of the planets at the moment of your nativity, that love presents his most rapturous delights to your joyful acceptance, yet a black speck on your horoscope (which by my skill, with your

your consent, I can obliterate) instructs me that you have been doomed to experience in this passion great disappointment; but yielding to its delightful impulse a second time, you shall then only taste what love truly is, and be sated to ecstasy."

"Love shall have no influence over my destiny—I disclaim his power entirely."

"You cannot, if you would, escape his domination. Venus is the planet that predominates in your horoscope, and she will gain captives for her son, you may be certain."

"I perceive now, sir, you know nothing of my nativity. Berenice's hair is the ascendant star in the constellation under which I was born, and which proves I shall be famed—not for love, but the conjugal virtues."

"And if, after the example of the faithful Berenice, you would sacrifice this beautiful hair," the astrologer returned, passing, at the same time, his fingers through a glossy tress that fell on her fair bosom,  
"to

“ to the safe return from horrid war of your husband, it must certainly, like hers, be transported to the skies, and become a reigning star in the firmament; but as I am rather inclined to think his valour would not be willing to put yourself-love to so painful a trial, tell me, angelic fair,” he continued, lowering his voice to a soft whisper, “ would you offer the sacrifice of even this single lock for a lover who adores you ?”

The philosopher, who had glided round from his first position, now stood by Mrs. Blandford's shoulder, apparently intent on some other object, but attentively listening to this conversation, during which he occasionally glanced a severe and scrutinizing look on the astrologer, as if willing, under his assumed, to penetrate his real character: from him however he turned, at this interrogatory, his quick-inquiring gaze on the novice, and waited, with stifled emotion, her reply.

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"So now you hope, like a politic men-  
dicant supplicating a donation from some  
niggardly miser, by piquing my generosity,  
to obtain greater concessions; but in this,  
most learned astrologer, with all your pre-  
science, you deceive yourself. My heart,  
I tell you, is not formed for love; it will  
admit no feeling more tender than friend-  
ship."

"And what, charming novice," returned  
the astrologer, impetuously, "is the Pla-  
tonic love to which I invite, but friendship  
of

of a refined cast—friendship pure, spiritual, and disinterested—breathing, with all the fire of passion, the elevation of honourable sentiment, and the sublimity of devotion?”

“It is certainly in a journey to the stars, or what is no less probable, under the influence of a full moon, you have caught this divine love,” said Geraldine, laughing; “it partakes of all the visionary flights of such a soaring expedition, and gives to your brightening fancy such ardour as to suppose you have brought enough of flame from the higher regions, ay, and of smoke too, to confuse the brains of us silly women, as well as set our very hearts on fire. However, friend, of real pure love, I am inclined to think you know just as much as of astrology—the former a passion of too subtle and ethereal nature to satisfy the senses—the latter, a science formed of chimeras by a disordered imagination.”

“By no means, fair novice; my love is pure as you are lovely; and in my astrological  
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gical predictions I have never once erred, I assure you; and of this truth you shall at once be convinced, if you permit me to initiate you into a science which shall prove a new and delightful study for ladies, whose pursuit of novelty we know to be unwearied, and whose desire to penetrate events to come, you must allow, is restless and insatiate."

"Thank you, sir, for that; but curiosity I have been taught to regard as dangerous to woman, and I have not courage to ascend so high as the stars."

"Be not afraid, since such study, under my tuition, would have more of enterprise than danger; besides," he added, lowering his voice to a soft whisper, but which the philosopher contrived, notwithstanding, to hear, "he only who might be authorized to reprove such study, is studying himself, as you must know, a new lesson with madame de la Cour; and can you then, angelic creature, so bewitchingly lovely, yet so neglected—can you, in a  
spirit

spirit of retaliation, do less than follow his example ?”

Neither the freedom of French gallantry, nor the licence of speech indulged with impunity at a masquerade, could authorize such an address from one gentleman to the wife of another; the philosopher appeared, by the trembling agitation which shook his frame, as he moved involuntarily round, and stood in a stern reproving attitude before them, to feel justly indignant of it; while Geraldine, who had for some time suspected the astrologer to be the marquis of Waramour, in a tone of severe rebuke, answered—“ Your insinuation, astrologer, is false, and your advice dangerous, neither to be trusted. The counsel which, like yours, plays in this insidious manner on the passions, is sinister and never to be relied on. But to this sage person,” she continued, directing her looks towards the philosopher, “ whose grave habit and steadiness of deportment announce reflection and deep-thinking, I  
will

will apply for advice to regulate my future decisions."

"Nor shall you apply in vain, beautiful, yet erring creature!" answered the philosopher, in a tremulous, but disguised tone; "innocence and charms such as yours might have power to draw the anchorite from his cell, as well as the sage from his closet, and should claim from every honourable man protection; yet, degenerate mortals that we lords of the intellectual world are! such circumstance shall rather invite treacherous design, than obtain, for the unsuspecting and unprotected female, respectable support, or prudent counsel."

"Don't mind, lovely novice, this pretended sage; if you do, he will certainly mislead you," said the astrologer; "for don't you perceive his sole pretension to philosophy is a talent for railing at his own sex, of whose superior attractions and consequent success he is evidently envious?"

"Your habit, gentle lady," resumed the philosopher,



philosopher, without appearing to notice this interruption, "announces your youth, and your yet undecided condition; be careful then how you decide; take reason, not the passions, for your guide, since your decision once made, no alternative remains but to submit with patient resignation to your fate—no solace but in the strict and steady performance of your duties."

"You invite my confidence," replied the novice, "by the solidity of your advice; but in the same breath you alarm me by the severity of your maxims; tell me, however, I entreat you, if in thoughtless youth we happen to make a wrong decision, is there no remedy nor repeal?"

"You have then erred by a too precipitate choice, and your present habit, lady, is rather conformable to your secret inclinations than suited to your state," said the philosopher, as under an assumed sternness, and with a strong effort, he appeared to restrain emotions that he feared might betray

tray his voice. "It is ever thus that unreflecting mortals, in seeking to deceive the world, deceive themselves ; but if you desire contentment here, and hope for felicity hereafter, appear what you are, and act up to the duties of your condition."

"Before you give lectures here," interrupted the astrologer, who felt provoked that the philosopher should thus obtain from himself the ear of the novice, "we must first be made acquainted with your abilities and pretensions, and how far they may entitle you to claim the attention of your auditors. Tell me then to what school do you belong—the old or new?"

"To neither."

"Are you an academician?"

"I might demand in return by what authority you make the inquiry ; but to prove to you I am not of that cavilling sect, who seek to obscure truth by wily sophisms, I will not engage you in any argument on the question."

"Oh ho ! you are a stoic then?"

"No ;

**“ No; I am a man liable to error, therefore not glorying in an austere virtue above humanity, but deriving whatever there is of good in my fallen nature from a higher source.”**

**“ You are then a disciple of Epicurus, I should suppose ?”** again inquired the astrologer, who put these interrogatories with a didactic self-importance, that tended more to shew his own knowledge of the ancient schools than for information, **“ and are come here, to admirable disciples we must allow, to teach us a higher zest for pleasure.”**

**“ Why will you,”** retorted the philosopher, disdainfully, **“ expose your ignorance of the ancient schools by such a question? for when were the disciples of Epicurus, those abject slaves of the senses, who degrade the dignity of human nature, by placing the universal good in sensual gratification, to the enjoyment of the brute—when were such known to derive their lights or their joys from the source to**  
**which**

which I allude, and which to them is utterly incomprehensible?"

"Have you, astrologer," inquired the novice, laughing, "discovered any thing like this in a black speck on your horoscope? Your prescience, I think, should have instructed you to guard against such reply by avoiding the question. In our over-anxiety to prove how much we know, we sometimes unfortunately discover in what we are deficient; however, you will not, I hope, at a first defeat, retreat from the field, but prove at once the successful fruits of your early studies by returning to the charge with vigour."

"I had rather engage a fair antagonist like yourself, who to the fascination of sprightly wit adds the still greater charm of heavenly beauty, than enter on the most learned discussion with all the philosophers in the world," returned the astrologer.

"I can entertain no doubt of your assertion, sir," observed the philosopher, dryly. "Those glittering talents, which, like

like the gaudy tinsel of an idle pageant, may serve to captivate the former, would make but a paltry figure in a learned discussion with the latter."

"Don't hope," cried the novice, addressing the astrologer in a half-whisper, and with a tone of mock gravity, "to conceal, by a pretended dislike to this encounter, your inability to contend it; for, as you commenced, it is obligatory on your part to support the attack. Return therefore to the charge with spirit; and to ensure you success, what think you of engaging the philosopher on your own ground, astrology, or the Platonic system?"

"To the study of astrology he could have no pretensions, and the Platonic system is too refined for vulgar conceptions: but do you come with me, fair novice," said the astrologer, attempting to take Geraldine by the hand, but which she instantly drew away, "and while we engage in these sublime studies, let us  
leave

leave the misanthrope to his spleen and ill-natured animadversions."

"No, rather stay, fair novice," subjoined the philosopher, in a solemn tone, "to hear what is meet for your future repose to learn; and first be warned, that the language which the generality of our sex addresses to yours, is as delusive as the science on which this astrologer forms his vain predictions; that language may be as foreign from their hearts, as astrology is dissonant to nature and reason; and the delusions into which man's false blandishments betray your credulous sex, more dangerous than even its idle predictions."

"Have you now not a single word to say in defence of your art, my poor discomfited astrologer?" inquired the novice, in a tone of ludicrous solemnity. "Every empiric, you know, should make a fine speech in defence of his trade, or the public will decry it entirely."

"My art," he answered, "soaring high above the public eye, and not obvious to

the vulgar mind, needs not the aid of pænegyric."

"His astrological art, gentle novice," said the philosopher, "is as shallow as the feeble mind that could revolve such subject, and raised on a foundation as light as the element through which the stupendous orbs move, by which he has framed its unnatural construction. But the art with which his false sex would deceive yours, is as winding as the labyrinth of Crete, and as devouring as the monster Minotaur! Attend, however, to the counsel of wisdom—to the instruction of experience and age, and you shall be taught to resist its baleful influence."

"I shall gladly attend, reverend sage," answered the novice; "for, alas! I am inexperienced in the world, and almost without a guide, but docile to friendly reproof, and desirous of useful information."

"Happy disposition of guileless youth, but woeful condition for untutored experience!" exclaimed the philosopher, impressively;

pressively ; “ yet will this disposition, fair daughter, stand firmly a test so severe to self-love as frequent reproof—will your desire of instruction continue ?”

“ Try me, sage father ; the counsel that is given in disinterested goodwill and sincerity of heart I can receive with docility, and follow with promptitude and resolution.”

“ Have a care what you say, lady,” returned the philosopher, in an under-tone, and while the astrologer’s attention was engaged by a passing mask ; “ have a care that you advance not beyond your power to perform ; past experience, methinks, should have taught you to distrust yourself.”

The novice felt suddenly confounded at this home charge, but recovering from her first surprise, after the pause of a moment, she replied, with quickness and vivacity —“ I know of no experience, sir, by which I should have been taught to distrust my



perfect readiness to meet deserved reproof, or receive instruction."

"Is it then necessary," he resumed, in the same under-tone, but with a considerable degree of stress and severity, "unthinking fair one, to recall to your recollection that you had once a friend, enlightened as well as affectionate—a friend sincere and steady, but the benefit of whose prudent counsel you eventually lost (though you still, and ever shall, possess her warm heart), during an absence of a few days, by your neglect of her parting admonition?"

Geraldine started ; could it be her affectionate Fanny by whom she was now addressed, or some friend, deputed by that dear inestimable woman to convey her advice and warning.—"Alas !" she exclaimed, in a sudden impulse of surprise and awakened recollection, "I lost also myself during that fatal absence ; but recalled to reflection by painful experience,  
I shall

I shall in future be more docile to instruction."

"Do you say so?"

"Oh, yes! tell me something of my friend—of that dear friend, and I shall lend a willing ear to your admonitions."

"Come then, fair daughter," said the philosopher, taking the astonished and much-interested Geraldine by the hand, "and in the name of that dear friend let me exhort you."

He led the novice (who, amazed at the solemnity as well as singularity of his address, resisted not) to an adjoining seat, and placed himself beside her; while the astrologer, exasperated at an interruption he could not prevent, followed muttering, and took possession of the unoccupied chair on the other side of her.

"Will you," said the latter, reproachfully, "abandon a friend, who was ready to instruct you in the most sublime mysteries of nature, to lend your attention to

the malevolent censures of a mere pretender at philosophy?"

"Friend!" exclaimed the philosopher, with emphasis; "how is the sacred name profaned by those who know not its incumbent duties! One real friend in the course of a long life is a blessing of inestimable value; you, lady, had indeed such a friend; how fatal to your inexperienced youth, that you are separated, and have lost the benefit of her prudent counsel! But——"

Geraldine, deeply moved and interested, was turned towards the speaker in an attitude of listening attention, when the astrologer, plucking her by the sleeve, and obtruding on her impatient ear some unwelcome remark, interrupted her quiet hearing of what further the philosopher was ready to add. Exasperated at this interruption, she turned on him with quickness, and, in a tone of cold ceremony, replied—"You must excuse my not attending  
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ing to you, sir, at present, when you perceive I am otherwise engaged. 'The novelty, and, I may also add, the frivolity of your conversation," she continued, on seeing he was about to reply, " might indeed at first have attracted and amused me; but the solidity and good sense which I now find in the discourse of this sage person, have power to silence even a woman's tongue, and direct every faculty of the mind to quicken her sense of hearing."

The astrologer bit his lips in silent vexation, while the philosopher, gratified, but without vain exultation, resumed—" We all occasionally need the counsel of a friend, fair daughter; because it is from want of sober reflection in ourselves, as you may have observed, or perhaps *experienced*, spring all our errors. The feelings are always prompt at decision; but reason, if consulted, shall take time to deliberate; and from serious deliberation results prudent action—from forethought future security. Who has not occasionally erred

by yielding to the first impulse of these warm feelings on which impetuous passions act? when was thoughtless youth, left to its own veering guidance, known to escape indiscretion? but happy they who gain from their first error experience to guard against future indiscretion!"

"Thrice happier they," cried the novice, with a sigh, "who, guided in youth by the prudent counsel of experienced age, have not erred at all! for one fatal step in the commencement of life's career is, either through despair or consequent mischance, too frequently followed by others, till unable to recover the first sliding trip, we go on stumbling from mistake to mishap to the end of the journey."

"Your observation, young lady," answered the philosopher, "whether suggested by experience or deep thought, is quite correct; yet so young, I should hope you have had no great personal experience; but feeling, perhaps from a disagreeable consciousness of a first error, the  
necessity

necessity for a future guide, you are now more inclined to attend to the advice that is given you. Yet not all those who shall pretend to advise may be found your friends, and under the semblance of friendly counsel might lie hid deceit and treachery ; be therefore" (and the philosopher spoke with a feeling energy, and strong emphasis, that proved him deeply interested in the subject) "*principally on your guard against whoever, in appearing to sympathize with your feelings, shall make light your duty.*"

"It is a cynic, who will certainly infect you with his morose gloom, with whom you have engaged in conversation," interrupted the astrologer; "not a philosopher, who, by his eloquence in explaining the laws of nature, might teach you to despise worn-out customs, and overcome the prejudices of education."

"I am neither a cynic," retorted the other, "who, by the expulsion of divine charity from the human heart, would

place all merit in reviling human nature; not even a philosopher of the new light, who, by paradoxical flights, would pass on you the subtleties of a depraved fancy for the sallies of genius, and present you the law of the voluptuary for the law of nature. No, sir, my philosophy, inculcating *self-knowledge*, imposes the necessity of a study from which the licentious man would shrink—the study of his own corrupt heart; and enjoining, as a consequent duty, *self-control*, it would weigh too heavy on the ambitious or covetous, for their aspiring or grasping spirit to embrace: on such admonition would be vain, and I might expect no return but derision or rebuke.”

“Would it not, however,” inquired the novice, “be charitable to make the trial? and here, in all conscience, are plenty of disciples with whom to begin.”

“Have you yet to learn, young lady, that corruption of heart not unfrequently proceeds from, and again produces, a defect

feet of intellect; and that among the many here, to whom I might give lectures on self-knowledge and self-control, few would understand me? But you, in whose pure mind the tyranny of the passions shall oppose no obstacle to the progress of knowledge, and whose simplicity of heart shall cause you to embrace truth with facility, attend, and I shall instruct you in a pure philosophy, that has for object the attainment of happiness through virtue."

"How desirable the end! how glorious the means! and oh! how rapid might be our progress," exclaimed the novice, with enthusiastic warmth, "if the imperfection of our frail nature did not oppose to our happiness an insuperable barrier!"

"No matter for that, since not in full enjoyment, that leaves us nothing to desire, nor yet in absolute perfection, a quality not peculiar to our probationary state, but in successful conflicts, and approving conscience, shall we find content here, and hap-



piness hereafter," answered the philosopher.

During the latter part of this dialogue, a Minerva had approached and addressed the astrologer; but not able, by the attraction of a poignant wit, to withdraw his attention from the novice, she directed, in resentment towards her, the chief drift of her fury.—“Do you not perceive,” she exclaimed, “how, under the apparent simplicity of a novice, a stranger to modern refinement, she practises a new and subtle manner of angling for hearts? Not content with the possession of yours, see how she tries every art to ensnare that of the philosopher. Can it be possible, discovering as you must the volatility of the trifling creature, you will thus swell her imaginary self-importance by these ridiculous attentions?”

Geraldine, roused at the appellation of novice, had turned round, and withdrew her attention from the philosopher, when  
the

the virulence of this speech, of which she lost not a word, prompted her to reply in these terms—"I am a novice indeed, and a stranger to the world and its artful refinements; yet perceiving, from a few months' experience, that not beauty, but effrontery, commands attention—not virtue, but the breach of moral obligations, obtains celebrity, I come to Minerva, as a proficient of some years standing in these arts of fashionable life, to instruct my inexperience."

"Your application, novice, is injudicious with regard to me, and respecting yourself, quite unnecessary, having inherited from nature more arts of refined coquetry than all the wisdom of Minerva could combat or eradicate."

"Success," retorted the novice, "is irrefragable proof of talent; and our Minerva, having succeeded for some years so well, proves her not unskilled in the arts of coquetry: however, as personal charms, notwithstanding the cosmetic art, decay  
with

with time, it is evident she must now transfer her empire to some younger beauty, or, like Juno, apply to Venus for her assistance, in order to maintain her power."

The astrologer and philosopher attempted to put in a word, neither of which could make themselves heard, while the goddess of wisdom and reason, transformed to a bedlamite, in violent rage returned—"Not being permitted to enter the world without a guide, is no proof of greater youth, but argues greater folly; and if the watchful duenna is now dismissed, we all know it is not because the wife has acquired more prudence or virtue, but because the husband begins to know himself; and feeling a consciousness how ill he becomes the chas to which he belongs, he is willing to descend to that of certain *horned* animals of the brute creation."

The philosopher (who perceived this severe sarcasm, let fly from jealous rage, and winged with inveterate malice, was directed to the novice) rose, and in warm indignation

indignation taking her hand, said—"Come away, gentle daughter! for don't you see it is not Minerva whom you have encountered, but an outrageous Calypso, ready, on seeing her studied attractions cannot stand the competition of your native graces, to overwhelm you with her jealous fury?"

Indignation had for a moment suspended with Geraldine the powers of articulation, but labouring to subdue it, that she should not gratify her rival by her power to move her, she stopped suddenly short in her movement to accompany the philosopher, to whom she replied, with admirable composure—"Rather a Bacchante, good father, who seems determined to promote our amusement by the absurdity of her conversation: let us then stay and enjoy the pleasure she affords."

Minerva bridled high with the rage she felt unable to suppress; her eyes flashed fire through her mask, and erecting her tall figure above the novice, on whom she cast a look of inexpressible disdain, she exclaimed—

exclaimed—"Insignificant little creature! is it for such as thee to deride the power of Minerva, or aspire to competition with it? But thy disgraceful fall shall prove the just punishment of thy insolent temerity."

"A very Medusa!" cried the philosopher; "for though she has purloined Minerva's helmet, it cannot conceal the snakes with which her head is environed: let us fly from their hissing fury."

"What need to fly," questioned the novice, triumphantly, "when her rage is as impotent as her charms?—neither, you see, can produce effect."

The indignant Minerva was about to reply in wrath, when a capering Harlequin, bounding with fantastic grimace and wriggling attitude up to her, caught both her hands in his, saying—"The antics of a merry Harlequin, contrasted with the vity of a sage Minerva, shall th off to extraordinary advantage

tage in the varied movements of the dance: don't you think so, madam?"

The haughty Minerva, too enraged to reply, struggled to disengage her hands.

"Every peculiar grace," Harlequin continued, bowing, smirking in her face, again elevating his head, and then drawing himself back in the most ridiculous attitude—"every peculiar grace is heightened by contrast. There now, madam, you frown in majesty—I smile in levity; you stand stock still—I make a bound. Can there be any thing more delightful?"

While Harlequin was still speaking, he made a caper, but retaining in the act his firm hold of Minerva's hands, this movement destroyed at once the easy grace of her majestic position, and the equanimity of her temper.

"Unhand me, sir, directly!" she cried out in excessive rage. "How dare you use *me* with this impertinent freedom?"

"So then, madam, you prefer figuring alone to a waltz?" said Harlequin, again  
fantas-

fantastically bowing and tittering in her face. "How unfortunate for me!" he exclaimed with a sigh: "but as your goddessship commands, it is my duty to obey with profound submission."

He let go her hands, and Minerva, now disengaged, would have turned away; but Harlequin, his arms crossed on his breast in a languishing position, and wheeling at each turn as quickly round, continued to oppose her intention.

"What think you, madam," he resumed, "if we were to revive the old-fashioned dance of the *Minuet de la Cour*? Now you for the graceful and grave," and in mimicking attitude he swam majestically up to her—"I for the light and merry," he added with a bound as he retreated from her anger—"it would be quite entertaining."

"Insolent, impertinent fellow!" exclaimed Minerva, petulantly, "don't tease me."

"Can the goddess of wisdom and reason, forgetful of her high descent, deign to be in a passion?" inquired Harlequin, in a tone

tone of affected surprise, and drawing himself up with assumed gravity. "But thank you, madam," he continued, bowing low, and again thrusting himself in her way, as Minerva would have moved off, "I see what you would be at, and am grateful for your obliging disposition: and so you will still keep up the contrast, which is unquestionably the very thing that sets off every quality to advantage: a fair lady is fairer near a brown woman, and beauty least resistless when shewn off with a foil; so, in like manner, when I make merry, you will be grave; and when I evince my good humour, you will fly off in a passion."

"Is there no one will free me from this fellow's impertinence?" cried Minerva, in an agony of angry passion, and glancing a look towards the spot where the astrologer had been seated.

The astrologer was not there; he had early disappeared, and was the very person who, to get rid of Minerva's importunities, had



had sent Harlequin to occupy in this unpleasant manner her reluctant attention.

A crowd, amused by the capers of Harlequin, had already collected round, and some among them, moved at the lady's piteous appeal, now interposed to deliver her from his unwelcome devoirs.

Meantime the philosopher (who had been for some minutes importunate with the novice to retire from this crowded spot) drew her away from the place where she had hitherto remained, highly amused at witnessing Minerva's anger and distress; but separated in the crowd by Geraldine's precipitation to escape the irritated goddess, whom she now saw at liberty and dreaded to encounter, he lost sight of her for a moment, during which the astrologer, who had still been hovering near, coming up, led her quickly away to another apartment, where Mrs. Oldenrig, taking suddenly ill, entreated, as he said, her immediate attendance.

Mrs. Blandford, whose compassionate  
nature

nature would not suffer her to hesitate on such an occasion, followed, without suspicion of deceit, to lend her assistance to her friend. Mrs. Oldenrig was not, however, to be found in the other apartment, and Geraldine was again returning to seek her in that which she had but just quitted, when the astrologer, opposing her intention, confessed it was only a stratagem he had in compassion made use of, to free her from the presence, equally tiresome and importunate, of the prosing philosopher and the virulent Minerva.

Geraldine was far from thinking as he did with regard to either : she had enjoyed the vexation of Minerva, whom, on account of her malignant disposition, she disliked ; and in the philosopher she had discovered a certain peculiarity of manner as well as of conversation, that while it awakened curiosity to learn who he was, had insensibly charmed attention. Dissatisfied therefore with the stratagem by which she was separated from him, and brought to this apartment,

apartment, she was proceeding directly back to the other room, in hope of again encountering the philosopher, or meeting some of her acquaintance, when the astrologer prevented her return a second time, by a strain of well-turned compliment, of which the purport was, the great taste she had that evening displayed in her choice of a masquerade habit, which set off, as he declared, to peculiar advantage, the perfect symmetry of her elegant form; and the brilliant wit she had exhibited in support of her character, with its wonderful effect in exciting the admiration of all the men, and provoking the envy of all the women: of which latter the rage of the haughty Minerva (who was no other than lady Castlegloss) was but a faint specimen, since her breast, rankling with envy at the sight of charms by which she saw herself so much surpassed, swelled with double the fury she dared to breathe forth.

Geraldine, who had already suspected Minerva to be lady Castlegloss (a rival beauty,

beauty, whose airs she had hitherto found extremely repulsive, and who seemed even of late, by the additional insolence of manner she assumed, to question Mrs. Blandford's right to the marquis of Waramour's attentions), was insensibly diverted from her first purpose of going back to the other apartment by this insidious address, which, while it complimented her own personal and mental graces, glanced at the defect in both of her fair rival.

Thus occupied, the philosopher, after a tedious search, found the novice; and neither pleased with her desertion of himself, nor the companion in conversation with whom he discovered her engaged, he reproached her in a tone of pique for holding so lightly to her engagement.—“As one,” said he, “whose innocence in this maze of folly might expose you to danger, I sought you out, and made a proffer of my counsel—with a seeming candour that I mistook for love of virtue, you avowed yourself open to conviction, and  
submissive

submissive to reproof; but of wavering faith, and unsteady in the pursuit of good, scarce does a trifling obstacle interfere, when your resolution gives way, and again your primary object becomes the high road to folly."

"I plead guilty in act to the charge," answered the novice, "yet not guilty in intention. Accident at first separated us, and I was brought here in search of a lady of my party, who desired, as I was informed, to see me. She was not here, nor did I seek her further; for charmed with the incense of flattery, which is never so sweet as while, regaling our own delighted sense, it blackens another, my ears were feasted with the most delicious treat to female vanity, praise of myself, with abuse of rival beauty: hence my entire forgetfulness of my monitor and his lectures. But now, sir, I again stand ready to meet your reproof, and while you frame admonition suited to the occasion, I will accept your attendance to seek my party."

Geraldine

Geraldine arose from her seat as she concluded this sentence; and to prevent between the astrologer and philosopher all further discussion, which, on the part of the former, exasperated at this second interruption, might not be divested of warmth, she proceeded in quest of Mrs. Oldenrig; while the two gentlemen, each equally emulous to maintain his right of attending her, walked on each hand, and by turns engaged her attention.

“Such ingenuous candour, daughter,” said the philosopher, as he moved on by Geraldine’s side, “disarms anger, blunts the too-keen edge of severe reproof, and claims indulgence. But beware of flattery, and most of all, that insidious flattery, which combines with your own praise aspersion of your competitor; it is worse than a two-edged sword, wounding at once yourself and another, and your wound being the least perceptible, shall rankle deepest, and prove most dangerous.”

“The philosopher himself,” cried the  
VOL. III. L astrologer,

astrologer, exultingly, "is not found exempt from the vice of flattery, by which, conscious of the unimportance of his lectures, he would recommend himself to his auditors. Beware then, fair novice, of advice, beneath which is couched such dangerous adulation; nothing being more common with designing hypocrites, when they invite confidence for a sinister purpose, than to cry up candour."

"I know not by what singular chance of good fortune," cried the novice sportively, as she tripped lightly on, "I am thus peculiarly attended. On one side," she continued, with a slight inclination of the head, and a graceful motion of the hand, that gave irresistible energy and spirit to her manner, "I am supported by a genius soaring to the very stars, and that gives to my personal charms a brightness superior to any of them—on the other," she added, turning with animation towards the philosopher, "behold a venerable sage, mingling with lessons intended for my improvement,

improvement, praise on my mental endowments that belong only to perfection. All I can say in return is, that both of you, gentlemen, possess in an extraordinary degree the gift of eloquence ; each of you individually excels in the *hyperbole* ; and both collectively present, by the opposition of your sentiments, a second figure in rhetoric, that I believe you call the *antithesis*. But while you both thus sport, for self-glory perhaps, or self-gratification, your respective talents, what, in the name of wonder, is to become of the poor novice, at whose silly brains all this artillery of fine flowing eloquence is levelled ? She has but one resource left to escape the complete overthrow of the little common sense which nature has given her ; and that is, like prudent heroes, who feel their inability for resistance, to take instant flight."

As the novice concluded these words, she advanced with quickened pace to the other apartment in search of her party, and still attended by her two companions ;



but who, after this hint, forbore to importune her with other conversation than such trivial observations as sprung from the passing objects.

After a complete tour of this, and in part of the other apartments, Mrs. Blandford at length made out Mrs. Oldenrig and some others of her acquaintance. Wearied with bustling so long through the crowd, she was happy to get quietly seated at last with her friends, where the gentlemen served them with refreshments, and from whence, engaged in trifling, but spirited and entertaining chit-chat, she retired not till the company began to disperse, and her party thought of returning.

When a motion was made to depart, the philosopher, who still kept near, pressed forward to offer his service to lead the novice to her carriage, and she gave him her hand without hesitation. The astrologer, with the same intent, advanced at the same moment; but Minerva, who had not appeared for some time, coming up and seizing his arm,

arm, obliged him to render to herself this duty of civil attention."

"Not with vain glory, madam—not for the overthrow of your reason, nor to intoxicate your senses, did I obtrude myself on your ear," said the philosopher, as he led Geraldine to her carriage, "but with an interest friendly and paternal, that holds your good at heart, and has your happiness in view. When next I have the honour to solicit your attention, it shall not be under an assumed, but in my own name: meantime revolve the advice a friend has given you. Adieu."

The philosopher had not need to reiterate this instruction; his advice (after the gay scene had long faded from her view) dwelt on the mind of Geraldine, who, curious to know more of a person that appeared to be so much her friend, spent the first hours that should have been given to sleep in vain conjecture. On Plunket, though there was certainly nothing in the voice to warrant such suggestion, her first

suspicion fell; but him she finally concluded to be far away at present, and even if there, indifferent, as she feared, to either her pursuits or welfare. Of Fanny she also thought, whose erect and ample form would not have disgraced the masculine habit, and whose enterprising spirit might well prompt, for the gratification of her affectionate wishes, such means of conversing with her beloved Geraldine.

## CHAPTER IX.



For I have loved—and loved so true,  
 Not e'en a thought has dared to stray :  
 And I have been deserted too—  
 To disappointment left a prey ;  
 And shall not kindred sorrows join  
 That warm, though wounded heart of mine?

BYRON.

.....

The long carousal shakes th' illumined hall,  
 Well speed alike the banquet and the ball ;  
 And the gay dance of bounding beauty's train  
 Links grace and harmony in happiest chain. *Ibid.*

Mrs. Blandford, long deprived of rest by the frequent recurrence of her thoughts to the conversation of the evening, in which the philosopher bore so considerable a part, did not rise the next day till the sun had turned the meridian, and was fast descending towards the close of his daily career. Without that keen relish for food which early

rising enables us to bring to the morning repast, her breakfast passed over in dull languor and tasteless satiety ; and the day, as unprofitable to herself as it was unimproving to others, was divided between the labours of the toilet and the entertainment of morning visitors ; and at night she was ready, according to the usual routine, to accompany Mrs. Oldenrig to a large party.

While waiting the appearance of that lady, Mrs. Blandford was informed captain Plunket requested to see her, on which, most agreeably surprised at this information, she gave orders for his instant admission. Charles entered, and with distant politeness was making a formal bow near the door, when Geraldine, delighted to see him, flew, in all the affectionate confidence of a fond sister, with extended arms, to embrace her kinsman. The temptation proved too powerful to be resisted, and Plunket, though sensible it would be only fanning a flame he should endeavour to overcome, felt willing to indulge in this  
ecstatic

ecstatic embrace: he pressed Geraldine to his breast, which at that moment of transporting delight throbbed with too ardent a pulse for fraternal affection, and thrilled with a rapturous emotion not known to a brother: yet memory almost instantly recalling to his recollection that this beloved creature was the wife of another, he drew suddenly back with a repulsive motion of the eye and hand, and with a sigh at this painful, but necessary act of self-denial, that seemed to rend his heart asunder:

Geraldine, hurt at this too apparent coldness, instead of inviting her visitor to take a seat, turned her head aside in offended pride and some confusion; but almost immediately recalled by a second profound sigh from Plunket, she again reverted her face, and fixed her mild eyes, swimming in tears, upon him; while his, which had been wandering over, in impassioned gaze, every improved grace of her perfect form, became rivetted on her:

lovely countenance in unconscious and melancholy dejection.

“ We were not wont to meet in this way—you have ceased to regard me, Charles,” said Mrs. Blandford, laying her hand, after the pause of a moment, on his arm.

“ Cease to regard you, Geraldine! Good Heavens! you know not—you shall never know how much I regard you!” exclaimed Plunket, taking her hand, which he pressed tenderly; “ but you are well—you are happy, and assured of that, I am content.”

Mrs. Blandford, evading all reply to this intimation, gently reproached him for not having before come to visit her; on which Plunket pleaded in excuse his long and severe indisposition, with the continued languid state of his health and spirits, which unfitted him for society, and rendered free air and tranquil retirement necessary for his perfect recovery: and then,

as

as if fearing to trust feelings that were becoming too impassioned, he hastily proceeded to the purport of his visit, which was the delivery of a letter from Fanny O'Grady.

Geraldine, in a glow of affectionate transport at the mention of that kind friend's name, impatiently inquired if he had lately seen her, or if she were well and happy? Plunket was proceeding to satisfy these inquiries, when the entrance of Mrs. Oldenrig interrupted their conversation, on which, after promising to wait on Mrs. Blandford in the morning, he bowed to both ladies and retired.

Mrs. Blandford's impatience to learn news of Fanny made her wave all ceremony with Mrs. Oldenrig, whom she left alone, while she withdrew to her dressing-room, to read her maternal friend's welcome letter. It was brief, but, as usual, affectionate; contained little information respecting herself, but referred to Charles for particulars; and instead of the reproaches for



her long silence, which Geraldine dreaded to meet, overflowed with tender regret at their painful separation.

Now relieved from the uneasiness which betimes weighed heavy on her spirits respecting Fanny, and from her dread of the reproaches which she felt conscious she deserved for her unkind forgetfulness of this affectionate woman, Mrs. Blandford, in high good-humour, joined Mrs. Oldenrig, with whom she instantly set off for the party. There, flattered by the gallant attentions of the marquis of Waramour (which, through the habit of constantly receiving, were unconsciously becoming necessary to the support of a cheerful temper), she soon lost again all recollection of the virtue-kindling thoughts which Fanny's letter, and the unexpected appearance of Charles, had inspired.

On the following morning, punctual to his appointment, captain Plunket rendered a visit to Mrs. Blandford. The marquis of Waramour, early as was yet the hour  
for

for fashionable visitors, had already preceded him in his visit. Reclining in easy negligence on a sofa, which he occupied with the fair lady of the house, the marquis appeared to engage her whole attention; while Mrs. Oldenrig, on the other side of the fire, and pinching carelessly the blond trimming that decorated the sleeves of her morning wrapper, sat a silent spectator. Plunket felt so indignant at this sight, that he would have been tempted to withdraw almost immediately, had it not been for the apparent pleasure with which Geraldine, the moment of his appearance, sprang forward to receive him—the joyful transport with which she reiterated her welcome on his return from Ireland, and the tenderness and anxiety with which she again inquired after her friend and father. This reception awakening an unconscious pleasure in Plunket's breast, dispersed in part his chagrin, and enabled him to reply in a brief manner to the several questions she put to him relative to his

his journey, promising her, in a soft whisper, at a more convenient season, an ampler detail.

The appearance of Plunket, and the recollection of her father and friend, gave for a moment a pensive air and grave manner to Mrs. Blandford; but directing a placid smile, which combined sweetness with confidence, towards Charles, she invited him, as she resumed her seat on the sofa, to come and sit beside her; and among other questions relative to his absence, inquired particularly when he arrived in Paris.

“Not until very late the night before last,” was his concise reply.

“*Only very late,*” repeated Mrs. Blandford; after which she again looked grave, and sunk into a fit of musing, from whence it might seem she had been identifying Charles with the philosopher, and felt disappointed on not supposing them, from his reply, the same.

The marquis of Waramour broke on  
her

her silence by the mention of madame de la Cour, of whom it appeared, from his renewed conversation, he had been speaking before Charles entered; and whom he now described as a woman of not only poignant wit and insinulative manners, but also of subtle art and refined intrigue, and of dangerous acquaintance. In this delineation of the character of the fair Parisian, he was occasionally joined and supported by Mrs. Oldenrig, from whose insinuations it might be inferred that major Blandford had rendered himself very particular in his devoirs to this lady; and that Mrs. Blandford should be made, not only fully acquainted with the nature of these devoirs, but irritated by such circumstance, seemed to Plunket the great drift of their joint remarks in this conversation. This induced him to make on the person in question the following observation:—"Madame de la Cour, without the smallest pretensions to beauty; is certainly, for the brilliancy of her conversation and originality

originality of her ideas, very much admired. She is also the fashion; and loungers, who have no relish for wit, or find no entertainment in originality, frequent her *coteries*, just as some of our countrymen here, without a sufficient knowledge of the language to enjoy the humour of the piece, go *à la comédie*; but such visits, I should suppose, are attended with as little danger to their hearts, as *bons mots*, which the others comprehend not, to the purity of their ideas."

"I think so too," cried Mrs. Blandford. "The French ladies possess the happy art of trifling agreeably, without serious consequence to fame or honour, in a way that to us might be thought extremely dangerous."

"So far from trifling, madam," said the marquis, "the only serious occupation of their life is love: no women can be more disposed to gallantry than the French; nor is there one among them a more practised adept than madame de la Cour. Under  
her

her tuition," he added, with a sarcastic smile, "Blandford, who confesses he is yet a mere novice, shall make a progress will surprise you."

"The lady shall certainly be entitled to my thanks," replied Mrs. Blandford, with an air of the utmost indifference, "if she succeeds in refining or even humanizing major Blandford."

"Don't you think, my lord," inquired Plunket, archly, "that there are certain fair ladies of our own country (whether impelled by a natural impulse, or only desirous to procure the admiration of a person of your refined taste, I shall not pretend to say) that bid as fair for celebrity in the annals of gallantry, as the ladies of this or any other nation?"

"It is all the fashion, sir," answered the marquis; "and you know whatever becomes the fashion, or custom authorizes, loses with us the enormity it may still retain in vulgar eyes. We must either re-  
nounce

nounce the world entirely, or conform in some sort to its fashionable modes."

"Your lordship, I hope," retorted Plunket, "would not have our fair countrywomen," (the marquis of Waramour, though residing in England, and ennobled by an English title, was, as well as Plunket, of Irish descent), "however it might set off to greater advantage their native charms, sacrifice the national character of virgin modesty and conjugal fidelity to the silly pretension of becoming vile copyists."

The marquis of Waramour, willing to wave such discussion, instead of replying, addressed, in a low voice, some complimentary speech to Mrs. Blandford, who appeared to listen with an air of complaisance, at which Blandford felt highly provoked; and on which, elevating his voice to command attention, in an indignant tone, he thus continued:—"For the honour of the sex, I hope our Hibernian fair (to the exception

ception of a few solitary instances) will not become apostates to these national virtues, notwithstanding the fatal prevalence in the example set them by some of our most talented men, who, on every occasion of good to the country, and laudable pride in themselves, which should make them avow and regard it, forget *they are Irish.*"

This was a consciousness the marquis of Waramour, in the exultation of his proud elevation, seemed willing to lose; and of which his declining to vote for the national question of Catholic emanipation was but too evident a proof.

"However, with the beauty and talent so peculiar to our favoured island," Plunket continued, "I hope we still possess as much of mild virtue in our fair," (fixing his penetrating eyes on Mrs. Blandford) "and of high and aspiring honour in our men," (glancing in turn on the marquis, and repeating the last sentence in a tone of irony) "as shall rescue our country from the obloquy



loquy brought on it by such defaulters. What thinks your lordship?"

"Yes, Plunket," cried his lordship, sneeringly, "our greatest boast shall still be *the pretty maids and good wives of Ireland for ever!* Don't you think so, Mrs. Blandford?"

"Certainly, my lord; and you might also add, without reservation or drawback, experiencing, as you have, their military prowess, *their brave soldiers also.*"

"Bravo! that was indeed well put in, Mrs. Blandford," observed Plunket. "A true military man should never forget the Irish soldiers whom he has commanded; there is an enthusiasm in their manner of fighting, and an effect in the result, that render such forgetfulness incomprehensible."

"Occupied as my mind was with our good wives and fair maids, I had not leisure to bestow a thought on the others."

"And how many of these good wives, my lord," inquired Plunket, with a smiling and sportive air, that blunted the severity

city of the personal attack, while it rendered it not less obvious to others, "has your lordship initiated into foreign manners, and how many are you still emulous to initiate?"

"With merit that infinitely transcends the French ladies, and personal charms with which theirs cannot compare, you must allow, Plunket, that our fair countrywomen want a little of their spirit and vivacity to render them irresistible," returned the marquis, parrying, with admirable address and great good-humour, our hero's attack.

"And who so well qualified as your lordship, achieving conquest in the field, to inspire them with a dauntless spirit that shall dash at every thing? and who then so well entitled to enjoy the full benefit of the intrepidity you inspire? The victor in war deserves to be crowned with love. Don't you think so, ladies?"

Mrs. Oldenrig answered in the affirmative, and Mrs. Blandford, blushing crimson deep,

deep, replied, "that love had long since crowned his lordship, when Hymen had bestowed on him his amiable lady."

"How malignant," returned Plunket, in a gay tone, "to remind the most gallant man in France that he possesses so cumbersome an appendage as wife and children, when the presence of so fair a lady as yourself" (bowing) "is enough to render any man forgetful of such objects! But I crave pardon, my lord," Plunket continued, with determined resolution, to make the marquis of Waramour sensible he was apprised of his designs on Mrs. Blandford, "a gallant man, incited by the charms of beauty, is never disturbed by such unwelcome recollections."

"It is a strange licence," answered the marquis, in the same sportive strain, though he felt secretly exasperated, "and which you bachelors would arrogate solely to yourselves, that of being the only persons privileged to address any civility to the ladies. You are dissatisfied, Plunket, that

that I share with you Mrs. Blandford's attention; but, though I pity, poor man! your chagrin, I have not heroism enough to make a resignation in your favour."

Plunket glowed at the consciousness how much he desired it, and in his hesitation to reply, gave Mrs. Blandford an opportunity of saying—"You remind me, gentlemen, of the masquerade scene of the other night, when, a simple novice, making my first *début* on the grand theatre of the world, I found myself so ably supported by Wisdom and Genius. The sage, as is usually the case, played his part best; while Genius, with flashes of brightness to dazzle the world, possessed not enough of clear light to direct himself. The first, in the character of a philosopher, supported his part to a miracle, crying up the dominion of reason on the subjection of the passions; while *Genius*, to which *every man*, you know, my lord, in this enlightened age, should aspire, assumed the habit of an astrologer; but  
appearing

appearing to understand better the drapery than the spirit of the part, he performed it, like a schoolboy, after a bungling manner. Your lordship could not but have seen him," she continued, with an ironical smile, and in a tone of raillery, "and must, I am sure, have been highly diverted with the poor man's attempt at a part, which, to perform with appropriate humour and spirit, would, I imagine, require such a happy mixture of the profound with the evanescent—the deep research of science with the flights of fancy. But I may be incompetent to decide, and, of course, incorrect in my opinion; I should therefore like to hear what your lordship thought of his performance."

"That he was certainly not aware, madam, of the rigorous censor before whom he had to appear, nor the severe critique he was doomed to undergo, or he should have studied his part better; but having employed his efforts with a view to your entertainment, I should suppose even those  
poor

poor exertions, though unsuccessful in their attempt, are entitled to your indulgence."

"By no means, my lord," replied Mrs. Blandford, with vivacity; "these exertions were rather made to gratify self-love, or for the indulgence of his vanity, than for my entertainment; and I estimate them accordingly. And perhaps, were we to trace to their first source the spring of these brilliant actions of you military heroes, about which the world makes such a mighty fuss, we should find they often originate, like the astrologers, in vanity or self-love. For once be candid, gentlemen; don't you think so?"

"There is no polite man would dissent from the opinion of a fair lady," said the marquis, bowing.

"It may be the case," returned Plunket; "for we are frequently impelled into action, without taking time to investigate the cause from whence our acts spring; there are times, that if we knew truly in

what motive they originate, we might still have enough of virtue left to stop short in our career."

"The philosopher was disinterested at least in his advice, I should hope; did you see him, Charles?" inquired Mrs. Blandford, turning to captain Plunket. "But," she rejoined, on observing he hesitated to answer, "I suppose you were not at the masquerade, as you arrived so late in town?"

Plunket, having his thoughts apparently engaged by some other object, did not immediately reply, when the entrance of fresh visitors gave a new turn to the conversation, and rendered his want of polite attention less obvious. These visitors, determined, as it would seem, to outstay one another, and the marquis of Waramour resolved to outstay them all, Plunket saw little chance of obtaining for the present Geraldine's private ear, and duty requiring his attendance elsewhere, he retired.

So entirely did the adulatory conversation

tion of the marquis of Waramour efface from the mind of Mrs. Blandford the importance of Plunket's visit, and the communication respecting her friends in Ireland which he came to make, that on perceiving him rise to depart, she made no effort to detain him ; and Charles, deeply wounded at her evident preference of this nobleman's gallant attentions to his own plain but friendly address, quitted her house in pensive dejection and extreme disgust.

For five succeeding days Plunket essayed in vain to converse with Geraldine apart, though visiting her every morning, once in the interval dining at her house, and usually making one of the same evening party ; yet so engaged with company did he always find her—so involved in pleasurable pursuits—so environed with unmeaning triflers, or designing flatterers, as left her no leisure to bestow on a friend, who, perhaps not over solicitous to amuse, sought only to engage her serious attention. At a ball, however, given on the signing of the

M 2

preliminaries



preliminaries of peace between the late contending nations, which was to take place in the evening, and at which he was determined to engage her hand for the first set, he hoped, during the course of the night, an opportunity would occur, in which he might possess her attention, disengaged and unrestrained.

With this view captain Plunket was among the first who assembled at the ball-room, where he impatiently awaited the arrival of Geraldine, his eye fixed on the door, and watching the entrance of every female form that appeared. Crowds upon crowds, however, pressed on, moving majestically under a gay intermixture of waving plumes and blooming flowers, and resplendent with the blaze of diamonds that eclipsed their personal charms, before Mrs. Blandford, radiant as the morning in blushing beauty, and glowing with native loveliness, that could derive no aid from the splendour of dress, made her welcome appearance. Plunket flew quickly at her approach

approach to meet her, and procuring her a seat, took his happy post behind her chair. Determined now to anticipate every other claimant, he was prompt in his application for the honour of her hand, which he solicited with a thrilling emotion that combined hope and fear together.

“ You may be certain, Charles,” replied Mrs. Blandford, with one of those sweet expressive smiles which never failed to penetrate Plunket’s heart, “ that there is no person in the room with whom I would rather dance ; yet, as you are my friend, and that I may, without fear of unpleasant consequence, take a liberty with you I should not attempt with another, it will be only a conditional promise I will give ; you must not, therefore, be offended, if, with the caprice so peculiar to my sex, I should take it into my giddy head, though as yet disengaged but by you, to dance the first set with another ; but, like a good cousin as you are, be contented with accepting my fair hand for the second.”

Captain Plunket was about to interrogate her as to the cause of this particular arrangement, when putting her hand playfully on his lips, she stopped him short, saying—"Inquire not. Our sex, Charles, will have their whims—you must now indulge me in mine."

Plunket bowed a ready assent, and delighted with a familiarity that united confidence with kindness, continued to engage her in such trifling conversation as was suited to the place, and to which the present groups might be supposed to give rise.

While they were thus occupied, lady Castlegloss, in all the gay splendour of magnificent attire, and blazing in jewels, was seen to enter. With a proud consciousness of the elegance and grace of her majestic figure, she glided into the ball-room, and instead of taking a seat, where it was possible she might remain unobserved, except of those in her immediate vicinity, kept moving from one end  
of

of the apartment to the other, progressively swelling her train as she passed on, with all those whom the witchery of her smiles, or the sweetness of her inviting accents, might engage.

The indignant flush which gave a heightened colour to Geraldine's cheek at the appearance of the baroness of Castle-gloss, proved to Plunket her dislike of that lady; and this dislike became still more evident, in the emotion of the quivering lip and fading complexion, when the marquis of Waramour soon after entered, and that she saw the baroness impede his progress, by engaging him in conversation. In vain did Plunket strive to recall her attention to the subject on which they had been speaking; it was all directed, and with increasing agitation, to the parties newly arrived, whom she appeared to regard with fixed and critical observation. This sudden abstraction from conversation, which had, the moment before, so agreeably occupied them, deadened his sense of

M 4

pleasure,

pleasure, and drew sighs of deep anguish from his heart; but which, on reflection, he as instantly laboured to suppress, in order to observe more minutely Mrs. Blandford's emotions.

The fine expressive tint, which gave colour and animation to her lovely face, varied, Plunket perceived, with every effort made by lady Castlegloss to detain the marquis near her; however, the vermillion dye of her cheek became fixed, and the beam of her eye lightened with pleasure, when she beheld him break away, and cast round him an inquiring look, as he took the circuit of the extensive apartment; but who can paint her joyous rapture, or proud exultation, when, through lines of expecting beauties, she saw him approach, and press eagerly for the honour of her hand! Plunket, to whom such sight conveyed an anguish almost unfelt before, was properly sensible, by the force of contrast, of her feelings, and might, no doubt, duly appreciate, from the raging  
but

but suppressed pain of his heart, the joy and evident triumph of hers, on being led by the marquis to the head of the room to join the dancers. Racked with a jealous rage that he felt ashamed to avow even to himself, and tortured with the direful apprehensions that suddenly seized his breast respecting Geraldine's future peace and honour, Plunket, dead to every feeling of joy, and incapable of sharing the pleasure which surrounded him, sat, instead of seeking a partner for the dance, collecting fresh food for disquietude, in watching the gallantries paid by the marquis to Mrs. Blandford, and her too-pleased acceptance of them.—“Unhappy Geraldine!” thought he, “how soon shall thy innocence, amidst scenes of dissipation such as these, and meeting no support from thy husband, be wrecked! World of temptation and folly! how dangerous are thy snares to the young married woman, whose heart is not shielded by connubial affection, and who does not find in the confidence and

M 5

friendship

friendship of her partner, encouragement to virtue and a stay for honour!"

Mrs. Blandford, enjoying over rival belles the proudest gratification in the assiduities of the marquis Waramour, thought not of captain Plunket when the first set was over, but sat engaged in conversation with her partner, till the forming of the second set compelled him, through politeness, to divide his attention with some other fair lady; then left to herself, she looked around for Charles, whom, on not perceiving, she sought in the spot where they were first seated, and which, in pensive and melancholy mood, he still occupied.

For a moment the evident dejection of captain Plunket's spirits appeared to give a sudden check to the too-exuberant flow of Mrs. Blandford's, who inquired, with an air of tender interest, if he were not indisposed; but being assured of the contrary, and recollecting the triumph of the evening, her vivacity returned, and in a vein of gay humour, which occupied her

so entirely as to render her insensible to his depression, she sported innumerable, brilliant, and witty observations on the company, till it became necessary they should join the set.

During the dance, Charles's spirits, catching electric fire from occasional collision with Geraldine's, somewhat revived; and in rendering to his partner those little attentions which politeness exacts, he appeared to resume his wonted cheerfulness, and the subject of his chagrin was for the present excluded or forgotten. The dance concluded, he led her to a seat, and having helped her to some refreshments, took his beside her, in the hope of enjoying her conversation undisturbed.—“Our mutual friend, Fanny,” Plunket, after a hesitating pause began, and with an air of gravity, which, though unsuited to the place, was in perfect unison with his heart, “would have some difficulty in believing that six days could



have flown by, in each of which I have had the honour of seeing and conversing with Mrs. Blandford, without being able (so environed do I always find her with company) to detail to her compassionate ear the sufferings of that warm friend—sufferings incurred, my dear Geraldine, by her zeal in your service, and which, to promote your happiness, she would still be willing to multiply.”

“Of my beloved Fanny’s zeal I am fully sensible, Charles; but having already learned from her own pen that she is now well, and exempt from suffering, I became less solicitous about a detail which I knew would only irritate and deject me.”

“Would you not, however, consider that to recuse and strengthen your gratitude for the zeal of a steady and sincere friend, it might not be amiss to learn what on your account that friend has suffered? In the giddy whirl of pleasure, and surrounded by flatterers, we are too  
apt,

apt, dear Geraldine, to forget, because they do not dazzle, the calm, but essential efforts of a friend."

"You may—you must be right, Charles; and I take blame to myself for an inattention, which, without feeling, favours too much of indifference to my beloved Fanny. However, if you call on me to-morrow, I shall be denied to every one, till I hear all you have to say concerning that dear woman."

Charles, restored to happiness and good-humour by this frank avowal, and the appointed interview her words implied, enjoyed for the rest of the evening the pleasures of the place, with the few exceptions of angry feeling, which the occasional attention of the marquis of Waramour to Mrs. Blandford inspired.

The following morning, faithful to this appointment, captain Plunket was with Mrs. Blandford before she quitted the breakfast-table. Her reception of him, sisterly and affectionate, was flattering as he  
could

could wish. After some questions, which only regarded his own more immediate concerns, Geraldine led to the mention of Fanny, of whom she required those details which he had to give ; and on which our hero narrated in full her application to sir Richard on her arrival in Ireland, and his obstinate rejection of her suit—the consequent snare spread for O’Grady, and her——But I forget these are matters with which my readers are yet unacquainted, and which render it necessary I should, while I leave captain Plunket and Mrs. Blandford engaged in social converse, lead them back to an elucidatory retrospect.

CHAPTER X.  
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Take thou some new infection to thy eye,  
And the rank poison of the old will die.

SHAKESPEARE.

.....

When the devout religion of mine eye  
Maintains such falsehoods, then turn tears to fires !  
And those, who often drowned, could never die—  
Transparent heretics, be burnt for liars !  
One fairer than my love ! the all-seeing sun  
Ne'er saw her match, since first the world begun.

*Ibid.*

THE first interruption to that forced serenity which Charles Plunket had endeavoured to assume, was produced by the news of major and Mrs. Blandford's arrival in Paris. At this unexpected and painful intelligence, every dormant passion, partly silenced by reason in his late perturbed bosom, rose to sudden mutiny ; when the tumultuous swell of his irritated feelings

feelings, the tremulous agitation of his disordered nerves, and all his convulsed emotions, were such as no effort of firmness on his part could conceal or subdue.

Colonel Clairfait, who was present, was moved to pity at witnessing this violent agitation in our hero, and sought instantly to relieve him by starting a new subject, and giving the conversation a different turn. On this subject he also tried, in despite of his usual taciturnity, to expatiate freely, in order to afford to his agitated friend opportunity to recover his self-control and accustomed composure:

“ I am afraid, my dear Plunket,” said that friendly gentleman, as soon as they found themselves alone, “ that your heart is not as secure from the witchery of that siren as you had supposed it; you must not risk your repose by a meeting with her. In the present state of your health, to expose yourself to such conflicts, would be dangerous; we will therefore procure leave of absence for a month or so, and go  
pay

pay a visit to my sister, who has hired a chateau at Marly, where she means to reside till the winter. The contiguity of this place to Paris shall render our recall, if necessary, prompt, and its solitude shall screen you from danger; while in the society of Mr. Wentworth, my sister, and their daughter, who is a pretty and gentle girl, you shall regain your usual composure: and there, my dear boy, if, instead of breaking your chains, you could exchange them for others, you would find these last, I might venture to predict, of a less galling nature."

With the most lively sentiments of gratitude towards this kind friend, who had contrived such agreeable excursion for his peculiar advantage, Plunket acceded to the proposal, only replying with a faint smile to the latter part of the colonel's speech, that so far from submitting to new chains, he was resolved his heart should remain invulnerable to love, and inaccessible to female attractions for the present.

Colonel

Colonel Clairfait found no difficulty in procuring leave of absence; on the following morning, therefore, the two friends quitted Paris for the beautiful village of Marly, and arrived to an early dinner at Mr. Wentworth's chateau, most delightfully situated on the banks of the Seine.

Here, in this tranquil retreat, remote from the noise, tumult, and dissipation of Paris, Mr. Wentworth, who was far advanced in life, of infirm health, and feeble constitution, enjoyed, with his lady and daughter, all the rational pleasures of refined domestic life. Mrs. Wentworth, though by several years his junior, had already attained that sober age when the pleasures of sense yield place to the more solid enjoyment of reason: with a pleasing exterior, and agreeable manners, this lady had seen the dawn of her charms entirely neglected, because Plutus had failed to gild them with a single beam of his golden rays; and having thus, in neglected virginity, survived her first bloom, she became,  
through

through gratitude, on presenting her hand to Mr. Wentworth, a most affectionate and attentive wife, ready, on every occasion, to comply with his humours, and conform to his habits, which were those of retirement and tranquil ease. Hence, at their country-seat, and in the calm society of a few quiet neighbours like themselves, their time, since their marriage, had been chiefly spent; here their only child had been born and brought up; and here also this young lady, unsuspecting in her nature, and ignorant of the deceitful practices of the world, had acquired (though her education, regulated by both parents, had been constantly attended to) a strong tincture of romance.

With a tender heart, and enthusiastic imagination, Miss Wentworth had permitted her fancy to be captivated by the personal attractions of a young strolling player, who had persuaded the simple girl he was the son of a person of high distinction, drawn by the fame of  
her



her beauty to the neighbourhood under this disguise; and with whom, won by his secret assiduities, she was on the point of forming a disgraceful union, when their correspondence was fortunately discovered, and her flight prevented. The parents, seriously alarmed at this indiscretion in their daughter, dismissed her governess, whose too-negligent attention they severely condemned; and without giving the young lady the slightest intimation of their design, hurried her off to France.

This voyage was as well undertaken with a view of consulting their brother, on whose judgment they had great reliance, as escaping in future the artful designs of the player. Colonel Clairfait, who regarded this love affair only as the childish passion of a young and inexperienced girl, and which they must endeavour to supplant by an attachment to a proper object, recommended the parents' gentle treatment of their daughter, and a freer indulgence in the amusements suited to her  
sex

sex and age. A three weeks' residence in Paris, during which she participated freely in all its pleasures, restoring in part Miss Wentworth's gaiety, proved the wisdom of colonel Clairfait's recommendation, and allayed the parents' anxious fears.

Wearied, however, with the noise and bustle of this thronged place, and stunned with the perpetual din of the military evolutions that so often occur in a city garrisoned by whole hosts of armies, Mr. and Mrs. Wentworth languished for a situation more retired; yet still unwilling, though extremely partial to their native country, to expose their daughter to the future snares of a designing fellow, they sought, in the vicinity of Paris, a residence, that by its variety might continue to afford amusement to the young lady, and by its calm tranquillity would be more suited to their own grave turn and sober time of life. The beautiful village of Marly presented to their curious search the most attractive situation; and here,  
invited

invited by its peaceful shades, and allured by the hope of frequent visits from their brother, they hired a chateau for the season.

Miss Wentworth, of a mild and gentle disposition, was formed by nature, notwithstanding the imprudence into which the too-confiding simplicity and inadvertence of early youth had betrayed her, to make an amiable and affectionate wife. Sole heiress to her father's great estate, she would enjoy, during his life, a considerable fortune, and, at his death, be entitled to his large possessions. These considerations induced colonel Clairfait to desire the union of his niece with his friend; whom he not only admired as a brave and heroic soldier, but highly valued as a man of tried honour, extraordinary merit, and great good sense. The passion for another, with which each had been previously prepossessed, so far from proving an obstacle to their union, would, he imagined, now that hope, with both was extinct,

extinct,

extinct, only tend, if thrown by accident into each other's society, to attach them by an invisible chain, which some remains of a tender sentiment still lurking in their breasts should link. He imparted these views to his brother and sister, who, indifferent as to the acquisition of more wealth, and only desirous to form for their daughter an honourable connexion, were delighted at the prospect of such an union, and ready to second the colonel's efforts for its speedy accomplishment.

With this desirable marriage then in view, concerted for the generous purpose of promoting the mutual happiness and general advantage of his niece and friend, colonel Clairfait proposed to our hero this visit to Marly; to which the other (wishing for solitude to indulge in freedom from restraint his tender feelings, and desirous also of flying the presence of the too-fascinating Geraldine, to whom he was least willing to betray them) readily consented.

The evident satisfaction with which Mr.  
and

and Mrs. Wentworth received captain Plunket—the marked and distinguished attention they continued to pay him during his visit at the chateau—the pleasure his society appeared to give their daughter, with the frequent delicate intimations of colonel Clairfait, gave him reason to suppose his addresses to Miss Wentworth would not prove unacceptable to any of the party. Yet, though willing to admit this young lady's claim to personal attractions, and ready on every occasion to render testimony of her amiable endowments, as his heart remained inaccessible to any tender sentiment in her favour, he was careful that his assiduities should not exceed those little delicate attentions prescribed by politeness, and the failure of which might discredit his good breeding. Trivial, however, as were these attentions, they were so well received of the young lady (whose heart was extremely susceptible) as to produce in the parents complete satisfaction, and excite in the uncle a hope  
that

that the mutual happiness of the young people would be effectually and durably secured by a connubial engagement.

Plunket saw, meantime, on one hand, with the prudent eye of a man who looks forward to his advancement in the world, the great pecuniary advantages of this union; yet, on the other, he could not resolve to renounce all the glowing visions of ecstatic felicity with which he had once cheered his delighted fancy, and which now, like a bright prospect lost suddenly in black impending clouds, still charmed, though unseen, in recollection. His personal interest and sober reason did indeed prompt him to the union which his friend suggested, but his heart opposed such union. Miss Wentworth was handsome, yet she possessed not any of these touching graces of feminine beauty so peculiar to Geraldine, and which insensibly insinuated themselves into the raptured heart, and rivetted, even in defiance of hope, its glowing affections: she was also of a gen-

tle and affectionate nature, mild in her temper, and affable in her manners; but without judgment to discriminate, her particular notice could give no additional credit or splendour to the object so distinguished; and in vain did Plunket seek in her these original traits of genius which in Geraldine, however obscured by an erroneous education, occasionally flashed forth, and marked at once the noble nature of her mother, and the brilliant talents of the Plunket family.

Yet after an intimacy with Mr. Wentworth's family for nearly three months (during which, though making with the colonel frequent excursions to Paris on military duty, he passed a great portion of his time at the chateau) this first repugnance was insensibly wearing away, and Plunket, through the mere habit of abiding with her in the same house so constantly, might have been led to offer his hand to Miss Wentworth, whom he certainly preferred, exclusive of Geraldine, to any other  
WOMAN

woman of his acquaintance, had not a letter from Mr. Fairfield, creating a sudden alarm about his maternal friend, Fanny O'Grady, banished for the present from his troubled mind every other consideration, and determined him on returning to Ireland without delay.

In less than an hour after Fanny had quitted Mrs. Harty's house to meet sir Richard Courteney, a messenger on horseback arrived there, bearing import to that lady, that Mrs. O'Grady, obliged, at the express wish of the baronet, to proceed immediately on a long journey, could not return for some time; and that intending to sleep on the road that night, she requested her friend would send her night-clothes by the messenger, by whom she should have written had pen and ink been convenient: however, he was desired to say that when Mrs. O'Grady was arrived at the place of her destination, Mrs. Harty should hear from her more fully.

The widow entertaining no doubt of



this messenger (whose veracity, had she questioned it, the sight of a well-known horse of sir Richard's stud, which he rode, would have confirmed), gave him the night-clothes, and rested perfectly easy in the hope of hearing from her friend in a few days, or a week at the farthest. A week, however, passed away, and another lagged slowly after it, without bringing Mrs. Harty the expected letter from Fanny; when fearing for her health or personal safety, she became painfully alarmed at this unaccounted-for silence. In vain did she apply by letter to their mutual friends in Dublin, for information respecting Mrs. O'Grady; not one of them had lately seen her, or was acquainted with her present condition or place of residence. Despairing of obtaining intelligence through any other medium, Mrs. Harty at last sought sir Richard, to learn from him the place to which he had sent Fanny; but environed only by lady Courteney's people, the baronet was, unless through them, inaccessible

ble

ble to the approach of strangers; and it was not till after many fruitless inquiries and repeated efforts, she came, through mere chance, to see him; when her surprise could only be surpassed by her grief and indignation, at learning from his own lips that sir Richard had not written the letters which caused Fanny's departure, nor had seen her since the night she quitted the castle in company with doctor Acerbus, from whom, he was informed, she had escaped, and was gone to Dublin; but that he was then ignorant of her meditated journey, and could now form no conjecture as to her present residence.

The hope held out to the too-confiding Fanny of a reunion with her beloved Geraldine, was all, it now appeared to Mrs. Harty, the vile fabrication of her inveterate enemies, concerted with malevolent intent of involving the unsuspecting woman in some new misfortune; which probable suggestion she endeavoured to impress on sir Richard's mind, in order that

he might investigate the matter, and instantly set on foot a speedy and effectual inquiry after her persecuted friend.

The credulous baronet, however, persuaded by lady Courteney of Fanny's occasional starts of insanity, and also of her plotting spirit in her lucid intervals, would not give ear to such intimation; but declared he considered her present disappearance, and the letters which she alleged produced it, as nothing more than another mad freak of her ~~own~~ contrivance.

Thus repulsed by sir Richard, Mrs. Harty advised with Mr. Fairfield, who fell at once into her opinion respecting this extraordinary affair, and who recommended immediate application to captain Plunket.

"His regard for Mrs. O'Grady," observed the magistrate, "will cause him to take instant alarm on receiving an account of her strange disappearance, and not only prompt his speedy return, but urge him to make the necessary inquiry. No consideration

sideration will deter—no fear will awe him from an investigation of the vile artifice contrived against this poor woman, whose friendless and defenceless condition will give her a claim on the protection of that generous and spirited young man, that will supersede every deference he might otherwise be willing to pay to the wife of his patron.”

This occurrence was the occasion of Mr. Fairfield's letter to captain Plunket; and that letter the motive which caused that gentleman's immediate return to Ireland.

## CHAPTER XI.

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Whence do your cheeks indignant glow ?  
Why is your struggling tongue so slow ?  
What means that darkness on your brow ?

A REVERIE.

EXPLAINING in a few words to colonel Clairfait his filial obligations to, and tender affection for, Fanny O'Grady, with the importance of the intelligence respecting her doubtful situation, which he had just received, captain Plunket imparted to that officer the necessity he was under of proceeding without delay to Paris, in order to renew his leave of absence to such length as might enable him to undertake a journey to Ireland; where his presence (as it appeared from the account he had just received from Mr. Fairfield) became necessary for the timely discovery of the defenceless

fenceless Fanny, spirited away by some concealed and malevolent enemy, and se-  
creted from all knowledge of her friends  
in such a strange manner.

Colonel Clairfait, though dissatisfied at  
the interruption given by this sudden  
journey to the progress of Plunket's grow-  
ing liking for his niece, could not but ap-  
prove his resolution of seeking redress for,  
and giving protection to, an aggrieved wo-  
man; he accompanied him therefore to  
Paris, in order to employ his interest with  
the duke of Wellington to obtain him  
permission to depart, and the leave of ab-  
sence requisite.

Arrived at Paris, Plunket was perfectly  
aware the first step he should take was to  
visit Mrs. Blandford, commune with that  
lady on the information he had just re-  
ceived from Mr. Fairfield, and learn from  
her if she had lately obtained any news of  
Fanny. Without such previous inquiry  
he perceived he might proceed to Ireland  
in the pursuit of a person whom he might  
possibly

discover without leaving France. The shattered state however of Plunket's nerves rendered him now unfit to sustain any violent conflict of his feelings : he was sensible that while his heart beat high with so tumultuous an emotion at the bare thought of seeing Geraldine, it was indiscreet to hazard an interview with her ; at the same time, his anxiety about Fanny prompting him to seek this necessary information, he wrote, though pained at the idea of appearing to the friend of his youth cold or negligent, the billet formerly alluded to.

Plunket stopped not in Paris but to obtain permission to depart and his passport, when proceeding direct to Calais, he crossed the strait, hurried with the utmost expedition to Ireland, and arrived, after a rapid journey of six short days, the third week of December, in Dublin.

Here he delayed not for repose after such expeditious and fatiguing travel, but urged by painful solicitude respecting the persecuted Fanny to the same promptitude

titude for dispatch, again set off for the town where Mrs. Harty resided, from whom he felt anxious to obtain all the information she could give concerning O'Grady's sudden disappearance.

This friendly woman's narration, with which she interspersed her own uneasy apprehensions and Mr. Fairfield's conjectures, added strength to the suspicions captain Plunket already entertained of lady Courteney's being in—or at least having some knowledge of Fanny's disappearance: to surprise therefore, or force from her an avowal of Fanny's present situation, or in case of not succeeding, demand of sir Richard an account of the absent woman, whom justice would oblige him to bring forth, decided our hero on making an immediate visit to the castle.

On the following morning, at an early hour for visiting, captain Plunket rode over to the castle, and dismounting in the stable-yard, passed unobserved by a walk frequented only by sir Richard, through



a side-door into the hall, from whence he proceeded, without sending in his name, or using other ceremony than first tapping on the door, to the breakfast-parlour.

Sir Richard (as Plunket, who was willing to make a first essay with his lady, would have it) was absent, and lady Courteney herself seated at breakfast. On the other side of the table sat a minister of holy mission, who, whatever his spiritual commission might be, was not, it was evident, from the plumpness of his looks and his florid complexion, unmindful of his corporeal support. Lady Courteney, surprised no doubt at such unwelcome intrusion (at a time that while she nourished with earthly food her bodily frame, she strengthened her spiritual part with heavenly conversation), raised her eyes suddenly on the entrance of our hero; but no sooner did she behold captain Plunket than her face turned to an ashy paleness, with involuntary disgust perhaps of an object so abhorrent, and  
the

the next moment it became flushed with anger.

Charles, with his accustomed easy grace, advanced into the apartment, and after the first polite inquiry for the health of the lady and sir Richard, apologized for his intrusion, by intimating that he had business with her ladyship of a particular nature that required her private ear; but for which, though greatly pressed for time himself, yet unwilling to trespass on hers, he should wait her leisure. Then taking a seat, to which lady Courteney, in her evident embarrassment and surprise, had failed to invite him, he again repeated his inquiries, in a tender tone, that combined respect with affection, after the health of sir Richard, whom he saw absent.

“Sir Richard, sir, whose health has indeed suffered materially from the ungrateful conduct of those on whom he was most lavish of his favours, is confined to his chamber by indisposition,” returned the lady haughtily.

Plunket

Phonket felt deeply affected at this information, and expressed, with tenderness and anxiety, what he felt for his once kind patron's indisposition, but made no remark as to the cause to which that indisposition was imputed; while lady Courteney, wisely inattentive to what he was saying, and even willing to forget such persons was present, recommenced with her spiritual friend their religious conversation.

Their subject being concluded with the morning report to which the lady, after a few minutes of apparent forgetfulness, had designed to invite her unwelcome guest, but which he coldly, though politely, declined, captain Phonket, glancing his piercing eye on the stranger, again intimated to lady Courteney that he had business for her private ear; on which the preacher, though rather invited by the looks of the lady to remain, but having now abundantly satisfied the cravings of nature, took the hint, and assuming towards the

the

the military man a most meek and gracious demeanour, withdrew from the breakfast-parlour to the garden.

“ I have been informed, lady Courteney,” said Plunket, drawing his chair towards her ladyship, and looking her full in the face, “ that the kind friend of my infancy, Fanny O’Grady, has become insane, and that your ladyship, with tender compassion for the unhappy woman, has considerately provided an asylum for her during this alienation of reason.”

Charles paused, expecting lady Courteney would reply, but agitated at the name of Fanny, whom, as a woman of profane principles and independent spirit, she conceived herself justified to dislike, her ladyship remained silent.

“ It was truly generous—it was extremely thoughtful in your ladyship,” resumed Plunket, “ to bestow such kind attention on the unhappy Fanny; yet it was nothing more than, from your *natural disposition*, might have been expected.”

Our

Our hero again paused, but lady Courteney, all seeming attention, returned no answer.

“Does your ladyship think she will recover from this unhappy malady? has she any moments of sanity?”

“I know not,” answered lady Courteney; “I am quite ignorant what turn her disorder may have taken.”

“Does not the doctor in attendance, madam, or the person to whose care you have consigned her, give you regular information?”

“From whom, sir,” demanded lady Courteney, raising her eyes on Plunket, with a fixed stare, “have you had your information that I consigned O’Grady to a doctor?”

“Your acknowledged humanity, my lady,” he replied in the same evasive strain, “might well suggest such useful expedient, and when it was necessary, you would not fail to execute it.”

“I gave myself more trouble about that  
woman

woman than she deserved," said lady Courteney ; " but destitute as I saw her of friends, and labouring under so deplorable a malady, in which she could not be considered as properly accountable for her actions, I found myself in conscience bound to pay her some attention."

" It was just what I should have supposed your ladyship capable of; but having done so much for poor Fanny, your anxiety that she should benefit of these attentions causes you, no doubt, to seek occasional information from the doctor."

" What doctor do you mean, sir?"

" The doctor, madam, or, though no regular-bred physician, that skilful person to whose management you have consigned her, and under whose prescriptions and judicious care I hope she will recover."

" Don't you know, sir, that with a subtlety peculiar to insane persons, she has escaped the doctor?"

" Is it possible," inquired Plunket, with affected surprise, " that she has a second-  
time

time rendered of no avail your kind attention?"

"And who, sir, has told you that I troubled myself a second time about her?" again fixing with a penetrating stare on Plunket her small sharp eyes.

"I know your ladyship would not consider it a trouble, when it was to render service to a suffering fellow-creature."

"Sir Richard's indisposition renders of extreme importance my attendance in his sick chamber; if, therefore, you have any business to adjust with me, captain Plunket, be explicit."

"My business, lady Courteney," replied Plunket, fixing his dark penetrating eyes in scrutinizing gaze on her countenance, which betrayed some confusion, "is to be informed how it fares with Fanny, and I know no person that on *that subject* can give me better information than your ladyship."

"What should I know of the woman?" demanded lady Courteney, attempting to conceal

conceal her apparent confusion under an air of great haughtiness. "If that, sir, be the sole purport of your business here, you are answered, and at liberty to depart."

"*What should you know of her!*" repeated Plunket, impressively. "Though the humility of your meek nature, my lady, may render you willing to disclaim these brilliant actions, for which the world gives you *credit*, yet you cannot possibly *conceal them!* and though the right hand, as I have often heard your ladyship observe, should not see what the left does, yet your light will shine before men, in despite of all this precaution."

Lady Courteney, at a loss to decide whether this speech was intended for compliment or irony, withdrew her looks from the too-piercing gaze of Plunket, and cast them, in evident confusion, on the floor; but willing to get rid, on any terms, of so unwelcome a visitor, she recovered her composure in a moment, and said—"You forget, captain Plunket, sir Richard is indisposed,



disposed, and oblige me, by retiring, to teach you, that I am not to be detained from his presence by this trifling."

Lady Courteney rose to depart as she spoke, but Plunket, rising also, seized her hand to prevent her retiring, while he answered—"I am unwilling to detain your ladyship from so pressing a duty—only give me the person's address to whose care you committed Fanny, and I shall retire this moment."

"What person do you mean, sir?" interrupted lady Courteney, and again her countenance underwent visible emotion. "I committed her, with compassionate intent, indeed, to doctor Acerbus; but whose vigilant care she unfortunately eluded, and of her proceedings since I can say nothing."

"It was truly kind and disinterested in your ladyship," returned Plunket, endeavouring, under a forced complaisance, to conceal his rising indignation, "to render such service to a person from whom you  
could

could expect no grateful return ; for Fanny's malady, if such it may be deemed, incurable I understand, precludes on her part all gratitude for your continued exertions in her favour. But to your extraordinary piety alone, my lady, must be ascribed this desire of keeping such good offices of humanity secret ; since seeking no reward but the testimony of your own conscience, you are desirous to conceal from the world the comfort you procure for the afflicted. Far from encouraging the presumptuous hope of sharing with your ladyship in these acts of divine charity, I have no wish of seeing Fanny *in a state of insanity*, and would only be desirous to learn from the doctor in attendance, if any hopes might be entertained of her recovery ?”

“ Doctor Acerbus seemed to think her case incurable,” said lady Courteney, forcibly withdrawing her hand, which Plunket still continued to detain, and making a step towards the door, “ as it was a complaint

plaint not only produced by unpleasant circumstances, but one that was inherent in her nature. The same disagreeable occurrences that disordered O'Grady's mind, have destroyed sir Richard's health completely; they have produced an irritation of his nerves, which would render your presence here, captain Plunket, of dangerous consequence to his precious life, and which obliges me, however contrary to all rules of hospitality or politeness, to entreat you would withdraw from the castle."

"I would be grieved to the heart to think," answered Plunket, still interposing between lady Courteney and the door, and resuming his former hold of her hand, "that such should be the precarious state of sir Richard's health; but your fears, my lady, creating in your mind excessive alarm, make you exaggerate in this account. However, give me the person's address to whom you have consigned Fanny, and I shall no longer trespass on time to the invalid so precious."

"I am

“ I am at a loss, captain Plunket,” said lady Courteney, haughtily, and drawing away her hand, with an air of disdain, “ to fathom your meaning, in applying to me respecting a woman of whom I now know nothing ; and I must add, sir, that I consider you equally cruel as rude, to detain me, thus reluctantly, from sir Richard’s presence.”

“ This evasion, lady Courteney,” said Plunket, assuming, all at once, a stern look, and seizing her forcibly by the wrists, as she made an effort to pass him, “ shall not serve your turn ; attempt not, therefore, to say you know nothing of Fanny O’Grady, when the plain fact is, you have consigned, as I am perfectly aware, the suffering injured woman to a certain person.”

The frequently-changing countenance of lady Courteney encouraged Plunket, who continued, throughout this conversation, to observe her with a fixed and penetrating eye, to make, on bare supposition,

tion, this bold assertion. She appeared confounded at it; but almost immediately recovering herself, and bridling with rage, she demanded, in an imperious tone—  
“By what authority he dared to question her in that insolent manner, or suppose she gave herself any further trouble about a perverse ungrateful woman?”

“By that authority, madam,” replied Plunket, with an austere brow and commanding air, “with which the laws of justice and humanity arm an humble individual, in order to bring to account even proud rank itself, when it dares, under shelter of its wealth or importance, hope to oppress, with impunity, a suffering fellow-creature. Armed with that authority, I come, lady Courteney, to demand from your own lips an avowal of where you have secreted Fanny O’Grady.”

“Insolent wretch!” exclaimed lady Courteney, blackening with rage, and scarce possessing power, through excess of passion, to give her angry feelings utterance.

ance. "Unhand me this instant, or I will summon my attendants to chastise you ! How had you, base fellow, the daring temerity, in my own castle, to come and brave me with this insolence?"

“Be patient, lady Courteney,” answered Plunket assuming once more a mild and complaisant air, “and as a friend, let me advise you. Deliver Fanny from the captivity into which you have ensnared her—restore her to her friends and liberty, and trust to my honour, and the influence I possess over the injured woman, to keep the affair secret.”

Through that black cloud which frowned wrathfully on lady Courteney's contemptuous brow shot, from her blazing eyes, flashes of fire; shaking with internal passion, the indignant dame struggled to disengage herself; and almost convulsed with the rising storm, that swelled her perturbed breast, essayed in vain, as pent-up winds whistle to burst forth, to give it utterance

“ If you refuse to accept these terms,  
VOL. III. O lady

lady Courteney," Plunket continued, "I shall be compelled to cite you before a tribunal, at which, with all your imperiousness, you will tremble."

"Barbarous man! are you come to murder me?" exclaimed at last the enraged lady, in a voice broken by convulsive sobs.

"No, my lady; the tribunal before which I shall arraign you condemns not to death—its sentence, unlike that which issues from courts of judicature, affects not the body; but, as rust tarnishes and corrodes the best-burnished metals, it preys on the fairest fame. This tribunal is PUBLIC OPINION! that idol, lady Courteney, before which you have so long bowed and worshipped; and before which, by the promulgation of this adventure of Fanny O'Grady, in which your ladyship has borne so active and conspicuous a part, I shall render you as foul as you have long laboured to stand fair."

A convulsive shriek was all the reply the horror-struck lady returned, and to which

which a violent fit of hysteric sobbing instantly succeeded. Plunket placed her in a chair, and perceiving the inutility of further addressing her, rang for assistance. A servant appeared; he was ordered to summon lady Courteney's woman, to whose care Plunket consigned her, and retired.

**END OF VOL. III.**



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